Akademie der Künste
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Symposium

Paul Robeson
and the Struggle of the Working Class and the Afro-American People of the USA against Imperialism

10

Periodical editet by the
Präsidium der Akademie der Künste der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik

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Distributed by: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, Berlin

Ag 504/70/72 Nationales Druckhaus Berlin – DDR

Symposium

Paul Robeson and the Struggle of the Working Class and the Afro-American People of the USA against Imperialism

Held in Berlin, April 13 and 14, 1971

German Academy of Art, Berlin
1972

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Preliminary Remark

In 1963 Paul Robeson spent a few months in the German Democratic Republic. He was visited by many old friends who had known him during the time of their enforced emigration from fascist Germany in England or the United States of America. It was decided to found a Paul Robeson Archive in Berlin.

In Spring 1964 the Paul Robeson Committee of the German Democratic Republic was founded with the following members:

Professor Dr. Franz Loeser, Chairman.
Theory of Science and Organization of Science Section
of Humboldt University, Berlin

Professor Dr. Alfred Katzenstein, Vice-Chairman.
German Academy of Sciences in Berlin

Professor Dr. Dr. Hermann Budzislawski
Editor of the weekly journal "Die Weltbühne"

Dr. Karl Hossinger
Director of the German Academy of Arts in Berlin

Dr. Horst Ihde
University-teacher at Humboldt University Berlin

Professor Dr. Kurt Liebknecht
Chairman of the Scientific Advisory Council
of the Ministry of Health

Professor Dr. Dr. Ernst Hermann Meyer
President of the Union of German Composers and Musicologists

Professor Albert Norden
Member of the Political Bureau of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany

Mr. Werner Rümpel
General Secretary of the Peace Council of the GDR

Dr. Klaus Steiniger
Member of the editorial staff of "Neues Deutschland", central paper
of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany

Dr. Paul Wandel
President of the League for Friendship Among Peoples

Professor Dr. Karl-Heinz Wirzberger
Rector of Humboldt University in Berlin

The intention of the Committee was to found an Archive to collect and evaluate material of every kind on the life, work and struggle of Paul Robeson. The aim being to preserve this invaluable material and utilise it for future generations.

The work of the Paul Robeson Archive commenced in the autumn of 1965 under the jurisdiction of the German Academy of Arts, Berlin, and with the written authorization of the Robeson family.

The Archive has collected not only evidence of Robeson's outstanding work as an actor and singer but also documents of his struggle for human rights. The archive has a collection of records produced in many European countries, in America and Australia. The most valuable items in the collection are tape recordings of his songs, his biography and his books translated into many languages, his speeches and articles, brochures which are dedicated among other things to the liberation struggle in African countries, correspondence, documentes, photos, films and newspaper articles which have appeared in many countries on his art and struggle, radio broadcasts, posters, programmes etc.

We appeal to all friends and admirers of Paul Robeson to place at the disposal of the archive any available material either in the original or as a copy.

The present publication is the report of the proceedings of a scientific conference held to honour Robeson as an artist and pioneer in the struggle for the liberation of his own black people and all the oppressed peoples of the world.

Papers and discussion contributions have been revised slightly. A supplement of selected photographs from the archive collection is included.

A German edition of the publication is available through booksellers, the English edition can be obtained through the German Academy of Arts Berlin, GDR 104 Berlin, Robert-Koch-Platz 7.

Brigitte Boegelsack
Head of the Paul Robeson Archive

To the Black Champion of Mankind
By Professor Albert Norden

In Paul Robeson we honour one of the outstanding men of this century. Great are the people who selflessly strive for higher aims, who come decisively and loyally to the fore in social and national liberation movements. Among them is Paul Robeson who for decades has stood in the front ranks of Black Americans and emancipation carried forward the torch of social with his great art and unyielding spirit has.

Son of a slave, an anti-fascist who opposed the nazis in Berlin and who stood in the battle against European fascism in the trenches of Spain, world-renowned singer for peace who grappled with the racists in the USA, who gave such convincing and overwhelming testimony for the accused Communist Party there that the judge refused to accept his statement for the record. Paul Robeson's statements could be kept from the records of the court but never out of the records of history.

The generations succeed each other but the struggle remains the same. Age makes room for youth. Forty-five years separate Paul Robeson from Angela Davis. The torch lit by the gifted artist and militant freedom singer will be carried forward by the new youth of Black and White America, whose symbol Angela Davis has become. The freedom struggle produces such heroes who are a precious possession of mankind. Reaction persecutes them but the people love them. We must preserve their lives and stand, militant, at their sides.

His Song - His Weapon
By Professor Dr. Franz Loeser

We are celebrating Paul Robeson's 73rd birthday with our symposium. It is both a joyful and important event for his friends throughout the world, for the millions in America, Asia, Africa and Europe who are seeking to cast off the fetters of imperialism and for the millions in the Socialist countries who have begun to realize his ideals. But it is also a black day for all racists, chauvinists and nationalists - for the murderers in Vietnam and the jailers of Angela Davis.

We hope that our symposium will contribute to a deeper and more universal understanding of the great significance of Paul Robeson as leader of the movement of Black America, as a Marxist-Leninist theoretician, as a political propagandist, as a freedom fighter, folk singer and actor for the struggle of the American working class and Black people of the USA against imperialism. It is also an expression of our solidarity with this struggle.

What is it that indissolubly links the name of Paul Robeson with the struggle of progressive mankind in our time, that makes him a model for the generation in struggle against imperialism? I would not presume to anticipate the results of our symposium and I suggest the following answer only as a basis for discussion:

Paul Robeson is one of the first representatives of the movement of Black America who successfully mapped out a consistent scientific road for the liberation of his people from imperialism. Along with his friend and comrade William Du Bois, Paul Robeson was one of the first leaders of black Americans to recognize the fundamental importance of the working class for the liberation of his people from imperialism. He was also one of the first representatives of his people to percieve that the inhuman persecution and oppression of black Americans and other racial minorities in the USA is not just a racial but predominantly a class question which can only be fully resolved by the establishment of a Socialist society. He therefore opposed every attempt to separate or isolate the struggle of black Americans from that of the American working class or to bring about a split between white and black workers. He recognized that such attempts, however skillfully camouflaged as progressive, benefit only the exploiters and are disastrous for the Movement of black Americans and for the American people.

Robeson knew that the victory over imperialism depends not on the good will of people alone, on their hatred of exploitation and war, on their dreams of a society worthy of man, but that it also requires a scientific theory - that developed by Marx, Engels and Lenin. He joined the CPUSA because bitter experience of the class struggle had taught him that the struggle against imperialism must be organized scientifically and carried through systematically. Robeson was never deluded by the attempts of American imperia-

lism to use anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism to lead his people astray and to weaken the unity of our international movement. In word and song he repeatedly emphasized the immense significance of the Soviet Union for the struggle of progressive America and his entire life was and is dedicated to friendship with the Soviet Union. American monopoly capital tried everything to divert Robeson from his road, to corrupt him, intimidate him and force him to his knees. But in all the years of extraordinarily complicated class struggle Robeson never once deviated in theory or in practice from the principles of Marxism-Leninism. From this alone it can be seen that Robeson saw further and more clearly and campaigned more scientifically and effectively than could be expected from a leading Black American at that time. Despite this, his great historical significance in the struggle against imperialism can only be explained in relation to his art. Robeson understood that the people can never be won and mobilized for the struggle against imperialism with scientific facts alone and his own ability to link the rational and the emotional in his propaganda work and to place his art at the service of the class struggle is almost unparalleled. He coined the slogan "My song is my weapon", behind which lies the Marxist-Leninist theory of art which he could only realize by consistent opposition to imperialist and revisionist conceptions of art.

Robeson rescued the culture of Negro Americans, particularly their songs and spirituals, from official ostracism and brought it into the concert halls of America and he further enriched his art by drawing on the cultural heritage of the international proletariat. Robeson is the patriarch of the American political song movement - the movement which produced Pete Seeger, which provided the decisive stimulation for our contemporary political songs and which today inspires millions in the anti-imperialism struggle.

Robeson's political effectiveness in the antiimperialist movement has seldom been surpassed; it springs from his special combination of outstanding acting ability, a unique and unforgettable voice, the great human warmth of his personality, his strength of character, the power of his deep conviction of the truth of Marxism-Leninism, his devotion to his people coupled with his loyalty to proletarian internationalism together with his unshakeable militancy in the face of nationalism, chauvinism and racism and in the cause of world peace.

In the GDR, in crass contrast to the FRG, Robeson saw many of his ideals being implemented, ideals for which he has fought all his life. One unforgettable event is the concert, held in the Berlin Sports Hall in October 1960, at which Walter Ulbricht awarded Paul Robeson the Star of Friendship Among the Peoples. After this concert Robeson said to me: "When I looked into the eyes of thousands of young people, when I felt the conviction, the devotion and passion with which they espouse the cause of progressive America, I became deeply conscious of the mighty transformation which has taken place in the minds of people in the German Democratic Republic. Racism, chauvinism and nationalism have been overcome in this part of the world once and for all. What was an unattainable dream for thousands of years you have been able to bring about in twenty years. But what are twenty years in the history of mankind? A fraction of a second!"

This explains not only Robeson's great importance for our joint struggle with all peace-loving people against imperialism but also the mutual appreciation and intimate friendship which links him with our republic. Today we are united in the struggle for the release of Angela Davis, the movement which has assumed a key position in the campaign of black Americans for democratic rights and the release of all political prisoners in the USA and which has begun to unite broad strata of the American population as well as large groups of people throughout the world in the struggle against imperialism. Our symposium should be part of this movement. May it help to organize the struggle against imperialism still more successfully, to implement Paul Robeson's ideals in the USA, too, and to free Angela Davis. We hope that it will make a constructive contribution to the organisation of the anti-imperialist movement, to the implementation of Paul Robeson's ideals in the USA and to the freeing of Angela Davis.

Paul Robeson's Legacy
in the German Democratic Republic
By Brigitte Boegelsack

In 1963 Paul Robeson spent a few months in the German Democratic Republic for medical treatment and was then visited by many old friends who had met him while they were in exile in England or the USA during the nazi period. They decided to establish a Paul Robeson Archive in Berlin, since it is impossible in an imperialist country to preserve and foster the work of a progressive personality in a humanist Socialist sense. Initially a Paul Robeson Committee was set up in the spring of 1964 to which well-known GDR personalities such as politicians, scientists and artists belonged. Its concern was to establish an archive responsible for collecting and preserving the entire documentary material on Paul Robeson's work so that this priceless treasure would not be lost but preserved and made available for future generations.

The Paul Robeson Archive of the German Academy of Arts in Berlin began its work with the written authorization of the Robeson family, in the autumn of 1965.

Not only evidence of his artistic achievements as an actor and singer are collected in our archive but also documents concerning his struggle for human rights. For example we have recordings from many countries in Europe, America and Australia and among our valuable possessions are tape recordings, his biographies and books translated into several languages, his speeches, articles, pamphlets, which in part also deal with the liberation struggle of African countries, correspondence and documents, more than 1,300 photographs, films and some 1,200 newspaper articles on his art and struggle, which have appeared in about twenty countries, radio broadcasts, posters, programs, and so on.

Many visitors from home and abroad come to our archive which is the only one of its kind in the world. Our contacts with all these individuals and institutions are a bridge to international friendship which extends to America, the "other America", and across the Soviet Union and India to Australia, New Zealand and to distant Japan, bridges which Paul Robeson himself began to build some thirty or forty years ago.

The first noteworthy utilization of our valuable archive materials was the comprehensive exhibition opened in 1968 on the occasion of his 70th birthday. Its aim was to document Paul Robeson's political development and activity and his artistic work, and to evaluate in doing so the relationship between his life and personality and the international movement for peace and friendship and against racism and fascism. In addition through the exhibition we tried to awaken a feeling of sympathy among the visitors for the people who today still have to fight for peace, freedom and equality.

By visiting the exhibition and attending some of the numerous lectures given, many tens of thousands of interested GDR citizens have enriched their knowledge of this great son of the American people whose art and struggle for human rights have inspired millions of people throughout the world.

Paul Robeson visited the Soviet Union for the first time in 1934 and at the end of his visit he said to Sergei Eisenstein who had invited him:

"I didn't believe that it would somehow be different for me here than in another country. But now for the first time I feel like a man. I am not a Negro here, here I am a human being. You can scarcely imagine what that means to a Negro."

He has visited the Soviet Union many times since then and every time he has gone as a friend to friends, affectionately and enthusiastically hailed not only as an artist but also as an honest and active champion of human rights.

The Paul Robeson Exhibition was greeted with just as much joy in the Soviet Union in 1970. We took it first to Tashkent where many exhibition visitors still treasured the memory of Paul Robeson's stay in their city in 1958 when he was a guest of honour at the Afro-Asian film festival and gave a concert in the Pachtakor Stadium.

A book on the life and work of Paul Robeson, richly illustrated and including the personal reminiscences of international personalities is in preparation and will be published in honour of his 75th birthday.

This symposium in April 1971 is being held to honour Paul Robeson as an outstanding artist and champion of the liberation of his people. He embodies both artist and fighter for he has been able in an exemplary way to make use of his inspiring art as a weapon in the struggle for human rights and has as a

result won millions of people throughout the world for this struggle.

Just as Paul Robeson began his fight, prepared by a humanist education and the hard experience of school and universities in the period of the Negro renaissance, so today's youth is continuing the struggle consciously and resolutely, recognizing - as Paul Robeson taught - that this struggle is not a racial but rather a class issue and that victory can be won only in alliance with the working class.

In holding this symposium in April 1971 the Paul Robeson Committee and the Paul Robeson Archive, generously aided by other institutions of the GDR, are fulfilling a political task, the task of contributing to the struggle of the international working class movement and the national liberation movement.

Excerpt from
New Trends in the Labour and Negro Liberation Movement in the United States
Claude Lightfoot

...One of the most outstanding developments in the Negro people's movement is the growth of the understanding of the necessity of utilising the power of the working class to achieve its aims, its objectives. As we indicated previously, this was not always the case. The present trend is marked by the events in 1968 when Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis.

Dr. King was killed at a time when his main efforts were focused upon the economic conditions of the most deprived sections of the Negro community. His understanding of the requirements of the period ahead was highlighted by the speech made by his widow, Mrs. Coretta King at a Convention of the United Automobile Workers' Union when she stated: "It is not an accident that my husband was assassinated while leading a strike, nor is it coincidental that the time of his assassination came when he was calling for a coalition of all the poor black and white, and urging that they create a union organisation. He was arousing a sleeping giant when he was cut down."...

...Another development of great importance which pinpoints the final solution of the problems of Negro liberation is the growth of a trend towards Marcism-Leninism among the youth. This today is becoming a significant trend. There have been many instances where in isolated situations these youth have set up Marxist-Leninist study circles. The outstanding excample of this trend was the development and growth of the Black Panther Party. This party came on the scene primarily as an organisation for self defense. However, it moved over very rapidly to an understanding that the whole system of capitalism and imperialism was responsible for the plight of the Negro people and had to be destroyed....

...Changes for the better among the white democratic masses, combined with changes within the Black Liberation Movement, are creating a platform for a broad popular alliance which will reflect the united power of both black and white. They also lay the foundation for an optimistic view as to what the future course of progressives will be in the US. However, racism has been planted deep in the social institutions of the USA. Its impact on the psychology of white Americans has made its oppressed classes ignore the mutuality of interests they have with America's Black masses. Despite the favourable changes of which we have spoken the establishment of a white backlash of more than politically backward whites is not an impossibility. Nonetheless we can be optimistic despite the fact that the pro-fascist reactionary forces in the country are on an unprecedented drive for power. This force has already been thrown on the defensive in many areas. Given an acoeleration of the trends we have been discussing the reactionaries can be given a decisive setback.

It is in this context that the people of the world can gain inspiration to mount an ever greater offensive against imperialism. This means greater support to the struggles being waged by the American people in general and Negro Americans in particular. Worldwide mobilisation against every act of US imperialism - genocidal treatment of Black America, therefore, is in the interests of every struggle being waged on every continent of this earth for peace, freedom and socialism.

FRANZ LOESER
Opening Speech

Ladies and gentlemen, friends and comrades,

In my capacity as Chairman of the Paul Robeson Committee of the German Democratic Republic and on the occasion of Paul Robeson's 73rd birthday, I declare this Symposium, "Paul Robeson and the Struggle of the Working Class and the Afro-American People of the USA against Imperialism", open. My most cordial greetings to you all.

It is with special pleasure that we welcome our foreign guests: Dr. Igor Geyevsky, representing the Peace Council of the USSR; William Patterson, member of the Political Bureau of the CPUSA; Lloyd Brown, writer and for many years Paul Robeson's secretary, and Mrs. Brown, both of whom are old friends and comrades of the Robeson family; Mrs. Beatrice Rippy Hollister and Mr. Carroll Hollister, artists from the USA who will open our session today with their artistic contribution and tomorrow night will perform in the Volksbühne Theatre as a highlight of our event; Professor Wallace Morgan from New York University together with Mrs. Morgan and their son.

I should also like to welcome Professor Alfred Kurella, member of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and Vice-President of the German Academy of Arts; Dr. Paul Wandel, President of the League for International Friendship and member of the Paul Robeson Committee, and Mr. Heinz Schmidt, Honorary Chairman of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee of the GDR. I should also like to welcome the representatives of the GDR Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as Dr. Karl Hossinger, Director of the Academy of Arts in Berlin and a member of the Paul Robeson Committee to whom we extend our heartfelt gratitude for the hospitality granted us by the Academy of Arts; Professor Kurt Liebknecht, Chairman of the Scientific Advisory Council attached to the Ministry of Health and a member of the Paul Robeson Committee; Mrs. Lin Jaldati, member of the Peace Council of the German Democratic Republic; Mr. Werner Rümpel, Secretary General of the Peace Council of the German Democratic Republic and a member of the Paul Robeson Committee, and Dr. Klaus Steiniger, head of the Capitalist Countries Section of the Editorial Board of "Neues Deutschland" and a member of the Paul Robeson Committee.

Now, dear friends and comrades, permit me to open our Symposium with some remarks on its purpose. At the 24th Party Congress of the CPSU comrade Brezhnev said: "In the USA the activities of the working class against the monopolies have assumed great breadth. The struggle waged by the negro population for equal rights and the struggle of young people against the war in Vietnam are marked by unprecedented bitterness." Our Symposium is meant as a contribution to this anti-imperialist movement. It should, in particular, help us to achieve a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of Paul Robeson's significance as a leader of the movement of black America, as a marxist-leninist theoretician, as a political propagandist, as a peace fighter, folk-singer and actor in the struggle waged by the US working class and the Afro-American people against imperialism and also to demonstrate the connexion between Paul Robeson's struggle and the struggle for the liberation of Angela Davis and our ardent commitment to and solidarity with her.

But why have we chosen Berlin, the capital of the German Democratic Republic, for this celebration? Why does Paul Robeson mean so much to us and what is it that links us so closely with him? Permit me to answer this question from my personal experience. I myself link the name of Paul Robeson primarily with two concepts: the struggle against racism and the struggle against war. It was in November 1938, the day of the "crystal night". I was walking with my father along a street. Suddenly a car stopped near us, four SS men jumped out, assaulted my father and savagely beat him up; then they dragged him off to Buchenwald concentration camp. A short time later my mother, too, was arrested and she was taken to Auschwitz concentration camp where she was gassed to death. Although this is an individual experience it was the fate of millions of our people who were harassed, tortured and butchered by German imperialism on political, religious and racial grounds.

A few years later, in 1945, as a young anti-fascist, I was a member of the first Allied contingent which was charged with occupying Japan. We had heard a great deal about the beauty of Japan, but our greatest expectations were exceeded when we approached the Japanese coast. We stood on the deck of our

ship and looked into the glowing blue of the ocean. Flying fish leapt out of the water, multi-coloured birds circled our heads and densely-wooded, deepgreen islands completed the picture. A fairy-tale scenery. But suddenly everything changed. The water become dirty and brown, no more birds; fish or any life whatsoever could be seen. The islands stood black and bare. And now we saw, across the sea, what used to be Hiroshima. What was now left of it to remind the world that only a few weeks ago hundreds of thousands of men, women and children like our own had lived and played there? All we could see was a vast area of charred earth, of nothingness. Auschwitz and Hiroshima - and today Angela Davis and Vietnam - symbolise racism and war and are varions names for one thing - imperialism.

During the Second World War German imperialism brought our nation to the brink of disaster. We as citizens of the German Democratic Republic can and will never forget that. It is for this reason, that Paul Robeson means so much to us and that we have a deep understanding of his ideas and are linked in fervent solidarity with his struggle. In sharp contrast to West Germany we have drawn the lessons from our past. And we have established a social system in which racism, anti-semitism, chauvinism and nationalism have been eradicated once and for all and we have ensured that never again can a war be launched from the soil of the German Democratic Republic.

Nobody can understand this more clearly than Paul Robeson. Many of you will remember the unforgettable concert in the Berlin Sports Hall in October 1960, when Walter Ulbricht decorated Paul Robeson with the Star of International Friendship. After that concert Paul Robeson told me how, en route for Moscow, he had left the train at Friedrichstrasse station in order to have a look at Berlin. This was during the fascist period and before he had even left the station he was treated with abuse by German fascists. He saw in their eyes the hatred against his person as a representative of an allegedly inferior race. And then he said to me, "This afternoon in the Sports Hall I looked into the eyes of those thousands of young people. I noticed the conviction, devotion and passion with which they have embraced the cause of progressive America and I became aware of the transformation which has taken place in the minds of the people in the German Democratic Republic. Racism, chauvinism and nationalism have been overcome once and for all in this part of the world. And what was once an unattainable dream of mankind, your people have accomplished in just a few years. But what are these few years in the history of mankind? a fraction of a second."

This explains not only the great significance of Paul Robeson for our common struggle with all peace-loving people against imperialism, but also the high esteem and deep friendship which connect him with our Republic.

One thing emerged quite clearly at the 24th Party Congress of the CPSU: the unity and power of progressive mankind have grown tremendously, providing the guarantee that we will banish imperialism from history. They will also enable us to free Angela Davis. Let us hope that our Symposium makes a worthy contribution to this goal!

Message from PAUL ROBESON, Jr.

Dear Friends:

Warmest greetings to the Paul Robeson Committee and to the participants of the Symposium. I want to express special appreciation to Professor Franz Loeser, the chairman of the Committee, whom I have come to know through our correspondence. I certainly hope to meet you and your associates in person before too long.

My father has followed the work of the Paul Robeson Committee with interest and gratification, and has pleasant remembrances of his visits to the German Democratic Republic. I am happy to be able to say that my father's health has improved somewhat in the past year. However, on the advice of his doctors he has decided not to resume his public life in any way.

The theme of the Symposium - my father's role in the Anti-Imperialist fight of the U.S. working class and the Negro People - is a very appropriate one. It is because of this role that the ruling class of the United States and the media which it controls continue to maintain their conspiracy of silence about Paul Robeson. They do so because my father challenged the racism of the United States tc its foundations and linked the li-

beration struggle of Black Americans to the struggles of all laboring and oppressed people everywhere.

Today in the United States there is beginning to be a reawakening of interest in my father as one of the great trailblazers. More and more, the inquiring minds of the new generation are beginning to break through the curtain of lies and falsifications to reach the truth. This Symposium and the important material gathered by the Paul Robeson Committee will certainly make an important contribution to the acceleration of this process.

My wife Marilyn and I regret very much that we are not able to be with you in person. However, Lloyd Brown, who collaborated with my father in the writing of my father's book "Here I Stand", is participating in the Symposium, and he can very ably represent the Robeson family. A friend and associate of my father's for many years, he was politically and organizationally responsible for the Paul Robeson passport campaign in the United States, and in the difficult years of the 1950's he was my father's personal representative. He is currently in close personal contact with my father and is now engaged in writing a major biography about him.

Although my father has retired completely from public life, he rejoices in the many who today march down the broad trail he helped to blaze. And he derives a quiet satisfaction from the fact that he has survived the fiercest repression and has retired undefeated and unrepentant. Today, when the threat of reaction again hangs over the United States, it is fitting to recall the words my father spoke at a civil liberties mass meeting in New York City in 1949. He said:

> "Let us be clear about this - we stand in the very forefront of this struggle by reason of the fact that the most powerful enemies of progressive mankind are closest to us... These so-called defenders of the American way of life haunt the homes of every decent thinking intellectual - they tell us what to read, what to discover, and they have descended to corrupting every part of our constitutional system, the executive, the legislative and now the judicial - to serve their dirty anti-democratic and anti-humanistic ends... It's about time we in America caught on. We chiefly are being hurt. We are the only ones hysterical, and the more hysterical we get, the more freedoms we lose. Yes, reaction is dangerous, deadly dangerous, but it's panting for breath. It's time we came to our senses and stepped into it, not away from it; forward, not backward; for we could deliver decive after decisive blow..."
>
> (signed) Paul Robeson, Jr.

Telegram from ROMESH CHANDRA

an friedensrat april 8, 1971
message for "international symposium on paul robeson and the struggle of the working class and of the afro-americans in the usa"

the world peace council can never repay the debt it owes to paul robeson, son of the great american people, fighter for peace and national independence for all peoples of the world stop who can forget his powerful voice pouring out of his heart bringing confidence in their power to the common working people of all lands stop the peoples can win, the peoples shall win - this was the message of paul robeson at every gathering of peace people which he attended stop paul robeson's voice has always been the true voice of the working people of the united states, the voice which challenges the policy of war and domination of the pentagon and wall street stop paul robeson's is the voice of great black peoples, the afro-americans who have risen to join hands with the peace movements in the united states stop today we honour paul robeson as one of the founders of the world peace movement and together with him, with the afro-americans, with the working people, with the peace people of the united states, we sing: we shall overcome.

romesh chandra
(secretary general world peace council)

Message from Mrs. Martin Luther King Jr.

February 2, 1971

Dear Dr. Loeser:

Please accept my thanks for your letter of November 10, in which you invited me to attend a symposium in Berlin April 13 - 14, 1971.

As a woman who has had an abiding concern about contemporary issues and problems, I found your series subject most appealing, and it is with real regret that I must decline your invitation.

Your invitation has not been declined without serious consideration to it. However, I, as you know, have fallen heir to some immense responsibilities which only I can fulfill, hence I have had to set for myself priorities and adhere to them.

My four children, the oldest of whom is fifteen, are first. Then, I am engaged in the continuing development of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Center here in Atlanta - not only in the organization, but in fund-raising as well. Further, I have an obligation to several organizations (including the Southern Christian Leadership Conference) with which I have had a long affiliation, and my speaking and Freedom Concerts schedule is filled for many months to come.

I am very grateful for your invitation, and I wish for you a meaningful and inspiring symposium.

I send my warmest regards.

Sincerely yours,

(signed) Coretta Scott King

WILLIAM PATTERSON

Paul Robeson's Struggle Against Racism and Fascism

I greet you all with an intense feeling of happiness. This symposium is a gala occassion. It is an historic event that will undoubtedly be hailed and heralded for years to come by progressive men, women and youth of every continent and every creed and color. It is an anti-racist event that can become the starting point of an anti-racist world crusade.

How historically significant it is that our host should be the Paul Robeson Committee of the German Democratic Republic. That unique Committee has brought us from near and far to this renowned and beautiful city to pay our respects and those of the millions for whom we speak to Paul Robeson, an internationally famed artist of the stage, concert hall and screen, a revolutionary humanist, a citizen of the United States and of the world of oppressed mankind. This historic gathering cannot fail to reveal more clearly the political significance of the outstanding contributions this magnificent Black man and his people have made to the world wide struggles for national liberation. This meeting will give impetus to those struggles, for it will reveal the far-flung allies which those freedom fighters possess. This gathering is extremely timely. There has never before been an event like this.

I am from that land in which Paul Robeson was born. It is a country of glorious revolutionary traditions. It is a land that has given birth to many internationally known Black revolutionaries. Through knowledge of their heroic battles, the inspiration of the struggles of its multi-colored toiling and enslaved masses, and a wealth of experiences Paul was molded into the giant of a freedom fighter he became.

He grew to hate the degenerate genocidal racist philosophy of the ruling class of his country and the savage inhuman social relations created by its racist policies. He hated the dehumanizing force of racism, but he grew to love his country's Black heroes. In the generation or two after Paul first sang for freedom, his country has given birth to a crop of youthful fighters for liberation like Ericka Huggins, Bobby Seale and the heroic Black woman, Angela Davis, who by virtue of her varied experiences in struggle became a member of the Communist Party of the USA.

The greetings I bring are not mine alone. They are those of the Communist Party, of Henry Winston, its National Chairman, Gus Hall, its General Secretary, and Daniel Ruben, its Organizational Secretary. I bring the greetings of thousands of oppressed and down-graded Black US citizens for whom Paul Robeson is a living symbol of hope and freedom. I bring the greetings of tens of thousands of workers and progressive Americans of every social strata, hue and creed for whom this courageous and remarkably talented Black man became a beloved spokesman. The America from which I come is on the move against war and racism, unemployment and inflation, miseducation and the pollution of air, water and the minds of men.

How appropriate it is that here in Berlin, the capital of the German Democratic Republic, we have been called together to pay respects to this Black Champion of human dignity. Berlin was once the capital of the monstrous

Third Reich. Here the Nazi terrorist, Adolf Hitler, whom the capitalist world spawned and brought to power, assured his savage hordes that the racist myths of the superiority of the blue-eyed, blond Aryan would hold sway a thousand years.

Now the beautiful city in which we meet located in the heart of Europe has put an end to racism. It consistently and constantly serves the cause of humanism and its people, our hosts, are in the forefront of those who fight for peace and international solidarity. We believe that racism will never again raise its monstrous head on the soil of the German Democratic Republic.

In that Berlin of Adolf Hitler, the racist myths of the rulers of the USA were blended with Hitler's myths of Aryan superiority. Together they helped to fire an era of cannibal-like imperialist wars, colonial intrigue and political adventurism. This meeting is a further exposure of the foul class morality that is flouted in the West as an expression of culture. It is a blow to the neo-fascists and Nazis of the world and to the racists of the USA, who aspiring to the mantle of the infamous Fuehrer, seek to provoke a Third World War. It cannot but be an inspiration to the heroic freedom fighters of my country. How deeply appreciative Paul Robeson will be. I remember that in speaking to the Black children of Little Rock, Arkansas, who had been spat upon and beaten as they sought to enter a white school where there were better chances for an education, Paul said, "You are our children, but the people of the whole world rightly claim you too. They have seen your faces and the faces of those who hate you and they are on <u>your</u> side---the love of all good people for children goes out to you." Here in this meeting indeed is further affirmation of that statement. In honoring Paul, we honor that for which he stands.

Paul was an early anti-fascist. He was ahead of his time. In the late 30's at a rally held in London in support of the then existing People's Republic of Spain, he said, "Every artist, every scientist, must decide NOW where he stands. He has no alternative. There is no standing above the conflict on Olympian heights. There are no impartial observers. Through the destruction, in certain countries, of the greatest of man's literary heritage, through the propagation of false ideas of racial and national superiority, the artist, the scientist, the writer is challenged."

Paul Robeson accepted the challenge. Had the artists, scientists and writers of the West followed him, who knows how the people would have reacted? He took his stand. He went to Loyalist Spain. He greeted the soldiers of the "Lincoln Brigade" from his homeland. He sang to the men who sought to stop Hitler at the gates of Madrid. Wherever he was, Paul opposed every phase of Hitlerism.

Paul Robeson was well aware of the price he might have to pay for taking sides against foreign policies of the U.S. government. He knew well that government's vicious record of lynching and savage barbarism against Blacks who sought to reconstruct the South after the Civil War. He knew of the persecution of that great Black revolutionary Frederick Douglass. But as he had taken his stand beside his own people, he now took his stand besides those in Spain and elsewhere who were fighting for a new world.

The U.S. government which refused aid to the Spanish People's Republic was finally forced to confront with arms the politics and the economics of the Third Reich. But those who rule the United States, the men who, since the Second World War, have staged bloody, genocidal, criminal wars in Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, never challenged the philosophie of Hitler, or moved seriously against his racist ideology.

The old Hitler is gone. But what a difference there is between Bonn and this Berlin. The U.S. army of occupation in Western Germany is steeped in racism at which the Bonn government winks. Its government also supports racist regimes in South Africa, Rhodesia and the Portuguese colonies. Its foreign policy is not alone a flagrant breach of the decisions of the Nuremberg Nazi War Criminal Trial Court, a breach of the Charter of the United Nations, it is a breach of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and, as well, a violation of the Provisions of Occupation of Germany. Racism has become an export article. As Hitler exported anti-Semitism, U.S. imperialism exports racism and white chauvinism.

Paul said that Spain was a turning point in his life. He saw the brutally destructive character of Hitlerism as it drowned in

blood a government of the Spanish liberal bourgeoisie. He saw American imperialists give aid to fascists and Nazis. He watched as the ruling class of England and France, in scorn, rejected the appeals of the Soviet Union and anti-fascists throughout the world for a united front of the progressive peoples of the world against Nazi fascist barbarism. He saw those who ruled his country ignore the appeal of Haile Selassie, Emperor of Abyssinia, for aid against Mussolini. What was of extreme political importance, he saw that "the struggle for Negro rights was an inseparable part of the anti-fascist struggle." That vision is correct today.

Paul Robeson remained a great and talented artist but life as he lived and saw it made of him an artist of the true democrats and revolutionaries. Paul called upon his people to enter the ranks against Hitler, then the main enemy of all freedom-loving humanity.

That was not the first time progressive Germans and the oppressed and exploited Blacks of the United States had inter-connections. In the second half of the 19th century, a savage Civil War was raging in the United States. The historic decision whether chattel slavery would be ended was in the balance. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, from exile in England, spoke out against slavery. Both of these great revolutionists were, as you well know, Germans. But they were also deeply concerned with the American scene and its impact on the world.

Speaking to the American working class and people generally, and to their President, Abraham Lincoln, in particular, Karl Marx uttered this deathless truism: "Labor in a white skin cannot emancipate itself while labor in a black skin is branded." Karl Marx spoke then to those who were fighting slavery in the United States. His works are now relevant in every part of the world. The workers of the world, regardless of skin color, must unite in struggle. Labor in a white skin cannot attain freedom while labor in a Black, brown, red or yellow skin is branded. That historic fact gives greatest significance to this event.

In passing, I must say that it was unfortunate, indeed, that Karl Marx, Frederick Engels and Frederick Douglass did not meet. Douglass was the greatest American of the 19th century, the leading Black revolutionary of his day and time. They were in England at the same time, but did not meet. But that is another story. In Paul Robeson's call to his people to rally to destroy Hitler and Hitlerism, there is the recognition that labor and progressive mankind, regardless of creed or color, are inextricably bound together.

Paul Robeson was in every sense of the word a student of the revolution which the Russian peoples unter the Party of the immortal Lenin brought to Tzarist Russia. It was that revolution against Tzarism more than any other event in the history of mankind that exposed the hypocrisy and fraud in what men call American democracy. Speaking of the Soviet Union, Paul once said, "Well, I went to see for myself and on my first visit to the Soviet Union in 1934, I saw how the Yakuts and the Uzbeks and all other formerly oppressed nations were leaping ahead from tribalism to modern industrial economy, from illiteracy to the heights of knowledge." It was not a miracle, but a new society that Robeson saw. It worked. Paul continued, "I came to believe that the experiences of the many peoples and races of the Soviet-Union--a vast country which embraces one-sixth of the earth's surface -- would be of great value for other peoples of the East in catching up with the modern world...I felt too, that the rapidly growing power of the Soviet Union in world affairs would become an important factor in aiding the colonial liberation movement; and when, not long ago, the world saw how vigorously and effectively the Soviet Union moved to block Western imperialism from retaking the Suez Canal from emancipated Egypt, the truth of this view seemed amply confirmed."

Paul studied the relation of art to the struggle for the liberation of mankind. He analyzed the art of many countries, seeking zealously to find its class content. And, as he sang those songs that fired the will for freedom of oppressed peoples, those people were lifted up by the physical and spiritual inspiration which he gave them. This is one of the great lessons of Paul's life.

Paul understood the historical period that gave utterance to the spirituals, the sorrow and protest songs of his enslaved people. They were in their time an inseparable part of his people's deathless fight for freedom. As he sang, Paul made these

songs contemporary. He made them part of the revolutionary heritage of the U.S.A. It was the artist-revolutionist at work. In that work, Paul Robeson has never been surpassed. What a lesson for us even today.

There is much that was spontaneous, much that was naive in those songs that came up from slavery, but Paul pointed out the difference in the era in which they were first voiced and that in which he sang them. Those songs came out of darkness but they pointed to the light. Paul carried them from yesterday into tomorrow. He understood the love of the masses for these songs that came from the tormented souls of the oppressed heroes and heroines and he applied them to the fight for freedom. Paul saw that art was related to politics and to everything else in life. His life has been guided by that thinking and acting for he saw that it moved others to struggle.

Paul studied the folk songs of many other peoples. He found in each the will to freedom. It was this research and investigation that made him see that the course of mankind's development differed only in degree. Robeson became an internationalist. He travelled throughout Europe, Africa and Asia and everywhere aligned himself with the masses of the people.

Back home he threw himself into the fierce battles of the anti-McCarthyites, who fought gloriously to stem the fascist-like legal-lynch drive of the U.S. Senator from Minnesota, Joseph McCarthy. Political frame-ups were a matter of common occurrence. The great Dr. William E.B. Du Bois, Black philosopher and historian, was arrested because he advocated peace. Militant labor leaders, Black men who consistently fought racism, Communists and others who fought for peace and against usurpation of the rights of the people were arrested and railroaded to prison.

Paul's life was in danger. In a little town called Peekskill in the Hudson River Valley, a grand peace and anti-McCarthy demonstration was organized. Paul was scheduled to sing, but the demonstration was smashed through hoodlums and pro-fascist elements spurred on by the local and state police. Cars were overturned, buses stoned, by-standers beaten.

With a mind to confront reaction, a second Peekskill demonstration was organized for the following week. Labor peace forces, Black militants were mobilized. Again Paul was scheduled to sing. A massive ring was formed around him by friends and admirers. Peekskill saw the unity of Black and white in America for the rights of both. The plans of reaction to murder Paul as they later murdered Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and a crop of other Black leaders were thwarted. Cold blooded murder had been added to the program of terror of the racists of the U.S.A.

The Second World War was over. The Nazi butchers had gone down to what looked like decisive defeat. The trial of their leading war criminals had taken place, aggressive war and racism had been condemned. The United Nations had been established. Its preamble read: "We the people of the United Nations" are "determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war ..." and "...to respect the rights of human beings" and "of nations large and small." Robeson was to make full use of the term "we the people of the United Nations." The people of the United States were a part of that body.

However, before Robeson left Europe, he was to make a remark that threw the leading racists of the U.S.A. into a mad frenzy. Addressing a peace rally in Paris, he said, "It is inconceivable that American Negroes would fight with those who have oppressed them for generations against the Soviet Union, which, in a generation, has raised them to a position of equality."

As one of the people of the United States of America, "determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", Paul had spoken out for peace. At home, his passport was taken from him by the State Department. He was denied the right to travel and, on a national scale, every possible effort was made to restrict his right to earn a living.

I can say today that peace has caught the imagination of the American people. Thousands of its youth cry, "Hell, no! We won't go!" They are echoing Paul Robeson. And I say that their recognition of the monumental peace making role played by the peoples of the great Soviet Republics and other socialist countries will follow. Robeson's words have helped to bring an awakening to the people of America. We are not here only to express our love for Paul Ro-

beson, we are here to express our deathless hatred for the vile racism that has made it impossible for him to be here and to carry the fight against that racism to every corner of the globe. That, I believe, is the meaning of this event! That is why I am jubilant!

The Charter of the United Nations made a sharp impact on Paul. By its universality it carried him beyond the Constitution of the United States. Yet it spoke of "we the people". Black men, labor, women and youth were a part of that "we". Robeson brought the decisions of the Nuremberg trial of the Nazi war criminals into the picture. As the attitude of the Nazi savages to its nationals had became of profound concern to the civilized world, he saw that the attitude of America's savage racists must also become the deepest concern of all mankind. A trial of the hierarchy of racism was on the order of the day. Who should indict those gentlemen? Paul did not believe that those who had signed the U.N. Charter for the U.S.A. represented the interest of its people -- Black or white. But they controlled its courts. He believed that the people should go to the United Nations with a Petition of their own, a Petition charging the rulers of the Western world with crimes of genocide, crimes that must inevitably lead to war if not stopped. Such a Petition would not only be an anti-racist Petition, it would be a peace Petition as well. By ignoring it, the world would court its own destruction. This is the monumental significance of the Petition "We Charge Genocide -- The Crime of Government Against the Negro People" which Paul Robeson as head of a people's delegation placed before the Secretariat of the United Nations in the City of New York in 1951.

Paul's persecutors became more vicious. He was not permitted to leave the U.S.A. and in the land of his birth, presumably a citadel of capitalist democracy, every institution of government was turned against him. The government charged that to permit Robeson to travel abroad would not be in the best interests of national security. Paul had spoken in the interests of a united people, pledged to live up to its Constitution, the Charter of the United Nations and the decisions of the Nuremberg anti-war, anti-racist trial. Paul had called for an end to ghettoes and slums, an end to illiteracy, dope peddling, and all aspects of degradation of the poor. Was this not a matter of public welfare and national security?

The basis from which the genocidal attacks upon Paul Robeson were launched was of a two-fold character. He was Black. He challenged both the foreign and domestic policies of those who ruled his country, those who had polluted and befouled its air and water and with its myths of racial superiority polluted the minds of millions of its people.

That people, Black as well as white, were not yet ready to take their stand alongside of Paul or to shield him from the genocidal blows aimed at his mind and body. Our enemies have tried to strike Paul's exploits and achievements out of the history of the U.S.A., but they will not be hushed up forever, as this gathering proves.

A new day is dawning in the United States. A day toward which Paul Robeson looked and for which he has worked ceaselessly. As we are meeting here a spring offensive is being mounted by the people directed in particular against war and racist repression. The rank and file of labor is on the move. Artists, scientists, writers in ever growing number are taking their stand. Black citizens of the U.S.A. are identifying themselves more closely with the national liberation struggles of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The way of life for which Paul worked so zealously will be realized. Millions of American youth have renounced the material values of their parents.

The many forms of repression took toll of Paul's health. He is now residing in the City of Philadelphia recuperating from the efforts made to destroy him by the ideologists of racism and their government. In his behalf, I greet this splendid event which deals a valiant blow at the enemy.

In conclusion, may I read a letter sent to this memorable gathering from Angela Davis, who is under solitary confinement in one of the prisons of those who wage murderous war abroad while nazi-like they commit genocidal murder on the domestic front. But is there a person here who does not know that these men of evil live in their twilight hour? Our heroic Vietnamese brothers and sisters deal irresistible blows against them. Through the channels of the U.N. and other avenues, the Soviet peoples have launched crusades for an end to aggressive wars and racism.

This is a gala event to a man who stands, as he has always stood, a monumental force for peace and freedom.

Message from ANGELA DAVIS
Marin County Jail
San Rafael, California
March 31, 1971

Dear Comrades:

Of the innumerable messages of support and solidarity I have received from abroad, the most impressive have been the tens of thousands of letters from the GDR. The letters and especially the drawings from the school children of your country attest to the truth of José Martí's comment on youth: "Los niños son la esperanza del mundo." You have given me and my captive comrades a tremendous reservoir of strength and courage. Having experienced the most formidable eruption of fascism yourselves, you, more than anyone are aware of the dangers we face in the U.S.A.

The savage aggression against the peoples of Indo-China in reflected inside our country by the growing suppression of revolutionaries. As larger sections of the Black, Chicano and Puerto Rican communities attain higher levels of political maturity and follow in the tradition of such great men as Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois by refusing to acquiesce in the government's monstrous deeds, we become the targets of an ever increasing official repression.

Behind the walls of America's prisons -- key instruments, along with the judicial system, in carrying out that repression - political consciousness in developing at an accelerated pace. Prisoners, from 30 to 50 %. of whom are Black and Brown in the major cities across this country, are swiftly realizing that their individual 'criminal' acts are inadequate responses to a complex system of monopoly capitalism and that, therefore, they must involve themselves in a collective movement of liberation. The works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and other revolutionaries are smuggled into prisons and radical political groupings have been formed in virtually every major penal institution.

There can be no doubt that the blatently totalitarian structure of the prison renders it by far the most hazardous terrain for struggle. Yet, despite the perils, many of our brothers and sisters have continued to courageously educate and enlighten their imprisoned companions. George Jackson, for example, who has long been a Marxist-Leninist, did not permit his indeterminate sentence of one year to life (for an alleged robbery, involving $ 70) to deter him from his political tasks. As a direct consequence of his politics, he has already spent eleven years in prison for a crime which usually brings two and a half years at the very most. Last year, he and two other Black activists, Fleeta Drumgo and John Clutchette, were framed by the prison authorities on a charge involving the killing of a Soledad prison guard. The State of California intends to kill these three men - the Soledad Brothers - in an attempt to terrorize thousands of political activists in California's prison population as well as our broader liberation movement and Black People in general.

The insurrection spearheaded by George Jackson's Brother, Jonathan, which occurred August 7, 1970 at San Rafael, must be seen against the background of the unrestrained brutality and political repression rampant in the prisons. Jonathan, James McClain and William Christmas lost their lives in a heroic attempt to compel the people of this country to look through the concrete walls and iron bars of California's prisons and to begin to demand changes. Because of my efforts to build a mass movement around the issue of prison repression, the August 7 insurrection was seized upon as an excuse to falsely charge me with three capital offenses. I will soon stand trial for my life together with Ruchell Magee, the sole survivor of the insurrection.

Ruchell Magee's previous experiences with the courts and prisons, extending over fifteen years of his life, are a classic example of the victimization and suppression of Blacks under the guise of justice. His original conviction brought him life imprisonment on a charge involving an alleged $ 10 robbery.

Our movement is rapidly achieving the consciousness that a primary target of our struggles against incipient fascism must be the penal system (according to Engels, the chief instrument, together with the army and the police, in maintaining class domination). Paramount among our demands must

be the release of all political prisoners -- the Soledad Brothers, Black Panther leaders, Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins, Ruchell Magee, myself and all the thousands of brothers and sisters whose names have not been learned as yet. We are acutely aware of the threads which tie the extended political persecution of Paul Robeson to the imprisonment of so many Black leaders today.

There is no doubt in our minds that the people of the German Democratic Republic will continue to support us in our struggles as we must consider every imperialist attack on your country and its accomplishments, an attack against all people fighting for Socialism and peace.

In Solidarity,
(Signed) Angela Y. Davis

HEINZ FÖRSTER
and students of the Karl Marx University:
Message to Angela Davis

This Symposium proves once again the lasting echo which the struggle of the working class in the USA, the black liberation movement and particularly, in recent times, the struggle for the liberation of Angela Davis have found in the German Democratic Republic. It is particularly the young people in our Republic who are moved by the struggle being waged by humanist and progressive forces in the USA for the liberation of Angela Davis. A group of students from the Karl Marx University in Leipzig chose for their annual research project to analyse the Angela Davis "case". They have come to the conclusion that it is a manifestation of the neo-McCarthyite methods being used to maintain US imperialism. As an expression of the students' solidarity I take pleasure in presenting the results of their research to you, Comrade Patterson, and at the same time I should like to read the message sent by these same students to Angela Davis.

Dear Comrade Angela Davis,

The students of Group III 51/52 (English/ Russian, Adult Education - Theoretical and Applied Linguistics Section) of Karl Marx University, Leipzig wish to express their solidarity with your struggle. We believe that we are able to support you most effectively by continually educating our fellow students. Within the framework of our studies and our work in the Free German Youth we analyse the nature of imperialism and in this we are particularly helped by our discussions of the 24th Party Congress of the CPSU. In our work as language teachers we will be educating students and pupils in the spirit of proletarian internationalism and solidarity with all people fighting for their liberation. We have a particular sense of solidarity with the struggle of the working class and the doubly exploited racial and national minorities in the United States of America. Your cause is our cause. Your enemies are our enemies. We are engaged in a common struggle against imperialism and we are fighting for your liberation!

These students will carry on their struggle; they have pledged themselves to do so. But the movement, "Free Angela Davis!", is growing, spreading and new forces are joining it. One student group in the second year will continue to watch and analyse the case of Angela Davis and will pass on the results of their research to the comrades of the CPUSA at a suitable time.

HILDE EISLER
My Memories of Paul Robeson

I should like to use two personal experiences to demonstrate to you what the quite ordinary, everyday racism of the American brand means. I was confronted with it when, after imprisonment and persecution by the fascist racists in Germany, I was living as a refugee in the United States. After my arrival in 1941 I had to earn my living and I was sent to a large office of the Clothing Workers' Union which was run by Social Democrats. I worked in an office where a great many girls and women, whose job it was to keep wage and salary lists of textile factories, sat at calculating machine. In the last row there was an empty stool next to a young negress. The supervisor asked me on my arrival whether I would mind sitting next to the negress. I was flabbergasted at this question, it hit me like a blow, and I answered: "But goodness me, of course I don't mind. I have no objection whatsoever to sitting next to a

negress." Now it was the supervisor's turn to be astonished. She looked at me as though she wanted to say: "You European greenhorn, it won't be long before you learn the American way of life too!"

A few years later the hot war had ended and the cold war started. The US imperialists were trying their utmost to transform the deep sympathy of the American people for the people of the Soviet Union, who had put up such an heroic fight, into hatred and also to discredit the Communist Party of the USA, using the wild allegation that the Party was actually led by an agent of the Kremlin, a foreigner, a German Communist. They picked on my husband, the German Communist Gerhard Eisler, as their scapegoat and intended to involve him in a monster trial meant, as I said, to transform the peoples' sympathy for the Soviet Union and the socialist countries into hatred. My husband had to stand trial several times in Washington, the capital of the United States. His attorneys asked the outstanding workers' leader Ben Davis, himself a lawyer and alderman of the borough of Harlem, to testify in Washington as a witness for the defence. It was then that we were faced with the following dilemma: The hotel in which we were staying was closed to Ben Davis because of his black skin. It was equally impossible to discuss the issues of the trial with him in a restaurant or café for he was also not admitted to such places. Nor was it advisable to go into Washington's black ghetto area - we would have been too conspicuous and FBI informers would have spotted us. The only way out was to go with Ben Davis and our attorneys to a park and to discuss all we had to talk about sitting on a bench. When the time came for Ben Davis to return to the airport to catch a plane for New York, it was the alleged Kremlin agent, the boss of all Reds, the atomspy and what have you, who had to stop a taxi for him, because if Ben Davis had hailed a taxi himself it would just have passed by without stopping.

My greatest and most unforgettable experiences in the United States were my meetings with Paul Robeson, both in a small circle and at great mass meetings. For me three concepts are synonymous - Russian war relief, Madison Square Garden and Paul Robeson. During the war an Aid for Russia Committee was set up which held mass meetings in the largest sports arena in New York, Madison Square Garden (which holds some 25,000 people), to arouse the sympathy of the American people for the heroic Soviet people, to collect funds and, subsequently, to demand the opening of a second front. It was sympathy for the Soviet people which filled Madison Square Garden but also and by no means least, Paul Robeson. At each of those rallies he sang his songs, his spirituals, his fighting songs, the songs of the Red Army in Russian and working class songs by Hanns Eisler in German. The impact of his performances was so overpowering that it is hard to describe. His power to enthral people by his singing, by his speeches and by his passion and his great love for the Soviet Union, which he expressed time and again from East Coast to West at innumerable meetings, was simply overwhelming. I can hardly believe that there is another artist of his stature alive who combines such high artistic skill, such profound humanity and such deep commitment to progress, to the liberation of the oppressed and to socialism. When speaking about Paul Robeson where do you begin and end?

Today and tomorrow many more contributors will be taking this opportunity to speak about Paul Robeson. I believe that we in the German Democratic Republic can best honour Paul Robeson by never tiring in the struggle on behalf of the young black Communist Angela Davis and through our efforts forcing Nixon to release her. And from this platform I should like to call out: Happy birthday to you, Paul, and very many happy returns of the day!

KLAUS STEINIGER
Tribute to Paul Robeson

All of us have been deeply impressed by the address given by Comrade William Patterson, member of the Political Bureau of the CPUSA. To have William Patterson here among us is a great experience and a great joy for all of us. This veteran of so many years, one of the great black leaders of the United States, stands like a rock in the struggle waged by the Communist Party of the USA. He is the man who in the tempestuous and militant thirties defended the Scottsboro boys, those wretchedly poor young negroes from

Alabama who were to be dragged to the electric chair by a racialist judiciary. At that time, as their leading attorney and on behalf of the Communist Party, he helped to organize the great campaign which eventually freed them from the clutches of a racist executioner. In the person of William Patterson we also pay tribute to those great American statesmen who recently indicted the genocidal crime of racism before the world forum of the United Nations. For this, too, we owe him our thanks.

In two days' time, I shall face the Consul of the United States in West Berlin in order to apply for a visa to travel to San Rafael as a representative of the central paper of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. In preparation for this visit I had to fill out that notorious questionnaire whose third or fourth question deals with the colour of skin. It is the official questionnaire which the United States of America distributes throughout the world for anyone who wants to enter the country. As far as I know, apart from South Africa, there is no other country which poses this question in such a questionnaire. In any case, I can assure Comrade Patterson and the other American comrades that I shall make use of this opportunity, as we invariably do, to lodge a protest with the consul against the questionnaire and such racialist practices.

Today we are paying homage to Paul Robeson. To pay homage to Paul Robeson means to work in his spirit . Robeson has never had time for empty symbolism or gestures. He has always been totally committed to and in the forefront of the class struggle and the struggle for the liberation of black Americans and all oppressed peoples. If there is one of his songs that has moved and gripped the hearts of hundreds, indeed millions of people all over the world, it is the song of Joe Hill, that great working class folksinger and leader of the strike of the Utah copper miners whom his singing endeared to the hearts of working people throughout the world. Paul Robeson is the great symbol of the struggle for solidarity and international friendship and the struggle against the oppressors of mankind.

William Patterson recalled Peekskill, that line of defence against McCarthyism in September 1949 near New York, when a living wall of black and white Americans side by side shielded Paul Robeson with their very bodies, when black and white trade unionists and peace fighters repulsed the fascist scum. Today that line of defence against US fascism lies in San Rafael, California, and just as at that time in Peekskill Paul Robeson was defended, the life of our Angela Davis is at present being shielded by the line of defence in San Rafael.

In this context I should like to say a few words about our concrete solidarity with Angela Davis. I believe we can with every justification state that there has never been any solidarity campaign in this country which has reached such dimensions, such breadth and depth, as the campaign for Angela Davis. The 17 million citizens of the German Democratic Republic have taken their stand side by side with the five defence counsel in San Rafael. The people of the German Democratic Republic as a whole are defending Angela Davis as their precious and close comrade and co-fighter.

We who work on the editorial board of "Neues Deutschland" have, in the course of the past months, forwarded tens of thousands of letters to the United States, heart-warming documents of the increasing maturity of our own population. All this has been a great experience for us, not just because of the emotional aspect of the great defence campaign but also because we have observed how people from the remotest corners of the GDR, very young and very old alike, are engaging in genuine and active solidarity. I would like to mention a small village school in Krien near Anklam which bears the name of Nguyen Van Troy, the national hero of South Vietnam who was murdered by US colonial troops. This school with the name of a Vietnamese hero was the first to notify us of its involvement in the campaign for Angela Davis. From a small, once desolate village in Mecklenburg, at the back of beyond, where feudal lords and their steel-helmeted cohorts and chauvinism used to rule the roost, came a moving message for Angela Davis and then so very many others followed suit. I recall too a team from the Central Store in Dresden which bears the name of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg and a school in Zittau named after Professor Du Bois. Then there was the action of the singers, artists and other members of the German State Opera in Berlin who added an

opera celebrating Joe Hill to their repertoire and then across the posters in front of the opera house advertising its performance they pasted the words: "In the name of Joe Hill, free Angela Davis!" I can recall too the people living in a Berlin old age pensioners' home who sent us a list with the name and age of every inmate, the oldest of whom was 93. Each of them not only signed for Angela Davis but donated one mark for Vietnam, for these old people had also become aware that the defence of Angela Davis and the invasion of Vietnam by US imperialism, the struggle of the Vietnamese people against that aggression and the struggle waged by progressive Americans constitute one and the same frontline. I recall the activities in our streets. Our American comrades should know these facts: Our young people marched through the streets of Berlin and of other towns in our Republic carrying the flags of Vietnam to collect funds for Vietnam and, at the same time, signatures for Angela Davis.

I should like to mention a very minor incident which happened three days ago. I sat in the Berlin underground reading the weekly magazine "Für Dich" in which there was a contribution on Angela Davis. Next to me sat two schoolgirls aged between 10 and 12. They glanced over my shoulder and one said to the other: "Look, new pictures of Angela!" This is the atmosphere among the people of the GDR now. Angela Davis is an ideal, a symbol, a figure admired by our young people for her loyalty to a great cause, which is our own cause too, for loyalty to the cause of the Communist Party, the cause of the triumphant ideas of Marxism-Leninism.

Dear American friends and comrades,

You represent here the other, the true America, the America in the tradition of Walt Whitman, Joe Hill, Eugene Debs, Bill Foster, Langston Hughes, Theodore Dreiser, William Du Bois, Martin Luther King.

You can rest assured that, in the spirit of Paul Robeson and in the indomitable spirit of international revolutionary solidarity, we shall do our utmost to protect, to defend, to save, and to free Angela Davis!

EDWARD ROYCE

Personal Reminiscences of Paul Robeson

To speak with William Patterson after 45 years of being a comrade and friend here in Berlin about Paul Robeson is really a tremendous privilege and pleasure for me. I am going to speak about my personal reminiscences over a period of many many years as a member of the Communist party working in Harlem, working with Paul Robeson on many fronts.

I can remember way back 50 years or more ago, when Paul was front page news. He had become one of the greatest athletes of all time, winning honours in high school and college. But to date he has not been entered in the hall of fame in his Alma Mater in Rutgers, in the university, in the college in New Jersey where racism still exists. Later as his fame as an actor had been established in Eugene O'Neill's plays "Emperor Jones" and "All God's Chillun Got Wings", which were claimed as superb artistic achievements, I had the pleasure of seeing him in action on the stage and also in many of the films that he produced.

But to have known Paul personally, intimately, to have worked with him, to have been a friend, makes one feel that life has been particularly kind in granting such a joy in so many years of association with this great man, this world-famous humanitarian. Paul with his superb voice thundering to the high heavens for peace, freedom for his people, for socialism, will go down in the annals of history together with Frederick Douglass, Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, Dr. Martin Luther King and the many other noble souls who have dedicated their lives to the people, as will my good comrade and friend William Patterson also, and the many other leaders of our party, and the many others who have given their lives for the freedom of their people.

I have seen Paul in action on many fronts despite his busy contract programme: in the Harlem cultural movement, in the peace movement, in the political struggles of our Communist party. With his warmth and enthusiasm he has inspired us all.

He was particularly active in the Ben Davis campaign for the New York city council. I was one of the campaign managers and had, next to him, the opportunity to see Paul's

devotion to our work, to the party. Ben had been a class-mate at college and we had remained good friends over the years. Paul sat in often at our meetings, helped considerably in broadening the entire approach to winning a seat in the council for Ben and I firmly believe he made a major contribution with his guidance and singing at our many street meetings and at the last campaign event, when almost ten thousand people came to our last two in-door rallies at the Alderborne and Mendelssohn's ball rooms, packed in like sardines, which were held simultaneously, something unheard of in Harlem. Lena Horne, Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Billy Daniels, Teddy Wilson, the Berry Brothers, Perry Plymouth, Count Basie - all performed. And many others who came at Paul's request. This was an unheard of, unprecedented and tremendous event in Harlem.

Page ads in the free Harlem newspapers were used, something never before in the history of our party, that we could use page ads for a Communist candidate, with Paul in the centre of these ads and all the other artists circling them. This is Paul's contribution to Ben's campaign. Harlem was stirred as never before! An overwhelming victory, for Ben Davis, a black man, for the first time in the history of our party, was elected into the city council - a Communist! And I can readily and firmly say that Paul had a great deal to do with this great victory of our party. Oliver Harrington and Aubrey Pankey, who are here today, also participated in this tremendous event and were greatly helpful in the work of our cultural committee in Harlem.

I distinctly remember when Paul left for the Spanish Civil War. I wanted to go along, but the doctors turned me down; but Paul went and made his contribution there, as you know.

I was standing by Paul at Peekskill and went through the horror of a near mass lynching. I had my car smashed by the racists and saw the amazing heroism of Paul standing there with the fascist racists on top of the hill, dozens of them with their high-power shotguns waiting to shoot him down. But there stood Paul and sang. Never in the history of anyone, of any event, has anything so heroic that I know of ever happened. With the guns turned on him, there he stood and sang as never before in his entire life.

On picket lines in front of factory gates, at mass demonstrations, I have marched with Paul on numerable occasions. This is something that is indelibly impressed in my mind and in my heart.

During the eight years of the McCarthy terror in which we all lost our privilege to travel abroad, Paul fought and won the right for his passport and eventually he got it in 1958, after eight years of being impoverished, of being denied an opportunity to sing anywhere. Public concert halls, theatres, everything closed to him, a campaign of terror against Paul! Finally he won and left for Europe; and I, together with many hundreds of the other progressives, got our passports and we traveled abroad. And I was fortunate in being in London at the same time that Paul was there, singing in St. Paul's Cathedral to 5,000 people, something also that was fantastic!

I remember one of the most significant and most tremendous events that ever took place in Madison Square Garden in New York. And Madison Square Garden, for many many years, was a place of tremendous events with tens of thousands of people participating. But one event will always stand out in my mind, an event in which Paul, Langston Hughes and I worked closely together: a 'Freedom Now Pageant', in which Paul took the leading role, with hundreds of outstanding artists participating. And for the first time in the history of Madison Square Garden, which holds about 22,000 seats and about 3,000 standing, it was overfilled to capacity! And ten thousand or more outside listening to our programme through loudspeakers! This has never happened in Madison Square Garden before or after this affair.

There were many years of such significant events that Paul participated in over the years: peace marches, demonstrations, Madison Square Garden meetings, where he sang. But what impressed me to a greater extent than anything was the fact that Paul devoted his time and talents to helping the younger generation of talented people in Harlem - artists, singers, dancers, musicians - guiding them. And through our work in the Harlem cultural committee we were able through parties and affairs and concerts, with Paul's help, to guide and help these struggling artists to achive fame and many of them became quite famous. This can be chalked up to Paul's other contributions.

He launched many of his people into professional life.

In the not too distant future, when we will have established a socialist USA, Paul and the many others who have fought for freedom will be honoured with monuments throughout our country. I will never forget Paul - his warmth, his smile, his handshake, and if you have ever had that pleasure of having Paul, with his tremendous hands, shake your hand, with his warmth and his "How are you, Eddy!" - no one has ever been able to give me such a rich feeling of friendship.

May Paul recover from his murderous attack and soon be with us again. This is my wish on his 73rd birthday. Get well, Paul! Happy birthday to you!

WALLACE MORGAN

The Black Liberation Movement and the Trade Unions

Today, 25 per cent of the workers in industry in America are negroes. The black workers are, therefore, an important part of the American working class. But this is a new development. Before World War One the number of black workers in industry was very small indeed. It was always the negroes' greatest problem to find a job.

In 1860 there were 4.5 million negroes in the USA. Four millions of them were slaves. Not all the slaves worked on the plantations. Many of them were skilled workers and were hired out by the slave holders. Frederick Douglass was a skilled worker of this kind, and he described his experiences in his autobiography. It was very difficult for the few free negroes who lived in the Southern States fo find work. Even when they got work their wages were very low, for they had to work together with slaves. The 250,000 free negroes in the Northern States could not find any work. The white workers did not want to work together with them.

The white workers in the South regarded the slaves as their enemies, but they were not against the system of slavery. This attitude was encouraged and exploited by the slave holders. In the period before the Civil War the working class movement was still very small. It existed only in the Northern States. But not a single negro was admitted as a member of the trade unions. Also in the North, many white workers were against the liberation of the slaves. They were of the opinion that the freed slaves would then come to the Northern States and take the white workers' jobs away. Others thought that first of all the white working class should free itself from wage slavery before the slaves could be freed.

It was mainly Joseph Weydemeyer who made the American working class acquainted with scientific socialism. As an editor of different periodicals, which were mostly published in German, he struggled for the point of view that white workers would never be able to free themselves as long as slavery existed in the same country. Slavery serves not only subjection of negroes, he stressed, but of the whole working class.

Through the active participation of the masses of the people in the Civil War slavery was abolished. The Civil War did away with the economic and political division of the country and thus with the impediments preventing the development of the USA into an industrial power. The result of the Civil War was that political power passed into the hands of the industrial bourgeoisie. It created the preconditions necessary for a rapid capitalist development of the country.

Slavery had been a significant impediment in the fusion of the American working class. Slavery had divided white and black in their struggle against capital, thus weakening the working class movement. The abolition of slavery created favourable preconditions for the working class, for the increasing struggle of the whole American proletariat for its political and economic interests. Although these favourable preconditions were now given, it was very difficult to implement the objectives of the American working class movement, for the system of restrictions and race discrimination limited the negroes' rights formally stipulated in the Constitution. That is why the working class continued to remain divided, and could not take up the struggle against capital in solidarity. This was always very useful for the bourgeoisie. And the American bourgeoisie derived benefit from this in order to divide the working class, to incite white workers against black workers, to break strikes, and to pay the lowest wages.

Millions of workers were needed for the rapid industrial development of the USA

after the Civil War. The factory owners, however, refused to employ negroes. Instead, they fetched workers from the European countries. Though the condition of European immigrants in America was very bad and, for nearly all of them, America never became the land of unlimited possibilities, they did have the chance to work, provided they got a job. But the negroes could not get work in the factories because the trade unions refused to admit them and because white workers refused to work together with them. Therefore they were forced to stay in the feudal system of the Southern States for decades after the Civil War. Time and again negroes demanded to be admitted in the working-class movement. As this did not happen, some of them tried to found trade unions of their own. But these trade unions could not exist for a long time. They were too weak, did not have enough money, and usually they were not recognized or supported by the white trade unions.

Some of the white trade union officials realized that the working class could succeed in its struggle against exploitation and oppression only if it acted in solidarity with the masses of the negroes. But these people were in the minority, and were not very successful. Racism was so firmly impressed in the minds of the Americans that negroes were not admitted in the trade unions. Negroes were allowed to do only menial work. But after the great influx of immigrants from Ireland and Italy they were ousted even from these jobs.

In the period after the Civil War right up to the beginning of World War One the condition of black workers was very difficult, as they could not get any work. This was the fault of the trade unions that refused to admit negroes. The "Knights of Labor", who made an attempt to organize the black workers in the eighties, were an exception at that time. The "Knights of Labor" were interested in enrolling all workers, black and white, as well as women. This was a trade union which did not, like the others did, enrol skilled workers only. For a short time the "Gnights of Labor" were relatively successful. They went into the Southern States and began to organize the negroes.

In 1885 they had 800,000 members including 80,000 negroes. As the negroes had no allies, especially in the Southern States, they used the opportunity extended by the "Knights of Labor". But soon, the "Knights of Labor" were attacked, above all in the South, and their leaders capitulated and abandoned their progressive attitude. They now became a very reactionary trade union which incited against the negroes. The members quitted, their numbers became less, and after a few years they were of no significance whatever.

After the "Knights of Labor" the "American Federation of Labor" was founded. At the beginning its leaders spoke a lot about the solidarity of the working class, but also from the very beginning they concentrated themselves only on skilled workers. As there were hardly any black skilled workers left, they did not get into the trade unions. The "American Federation of Labor" allowed individual trade unions to discriminate openly against the negroes.

In 1905 the "Industrial Workers of the World" (IWW) was established. It was founded by people who mainly wanted to organize the industrial proletariat, which stood completely apart from the struggle of the trade unions. The leaders of the IWW were of the opinion that the working class could take up the fight against capital only if all workers, white and black, skilled and unskilled, were in the working class movement. They demanded that the "American Federation of Labor" should pay attention also to the industrial proletariat, but the executive of this trade union persisted in concentrating on the relatively small number of skilled workers.

The IWW, however, wanted to organize the industrial proletariat, and from the very beginning it concentrated mainly on the negroes. The year 1909 was the best year for the IWW. It was now recognized as the organization which admitted all workers, especially those which were ignored by the AFL. In the IWW there was no racism, and its officials taught that black and white workers must carry on a joint struggle. It was also active in the Southern States, and it was also successful there.

But this trade union also made a big mistake by not realizing that the negroes in America had special problems caused by race discrimination. Since the negroes could not work in industry at all before World War One they were organized only to a small extent by the IWW. The IWW made the

mistake of not realizing that it was necessary to fight for the negroes' right to work. In spite of its mistakes the IWW was a very progressive trade union and a threat to the ruling class. That is why this organization was completely destroyed during World War One. Many of its leaders were deported, and not a few of them murdered.

In 1914 there were 5,192,000 negroes in America who had a job. 2,889,000 of them worked in the countryside and 1,357,000 were employed as servants. There was no other group of people in the USA of which such a large proportion had such low-grade jobs. The majority of the negroes still lived in the Southern States under conditions comparable with those of feudalism. Therefore, one cannot speak of a black working class before World War One.

During the war many workers were needed in industry. Since there were not enough white workers available, black ones were employed in the factories. The negroes thronged in masses into the cities of the Northern States. The negro ghettos such as Harlem in New York and Watts in California date from that time. In 1915 more than a quarter of a million negroes left the feudal Southern States and came to the cities and towns in the North. Many white workers refused to work together with negroes. In many towns negroes were terrorized by whites. Black workers were murdered, and their houses burnt.

Shortly after the war a left group crystallized within the "American Federation of Labour"; this group was very much influenced by the Great October Revolution. They demanded that negroes be admitted as members in the AFL. William Foster was one of the leaders of this group. Although the AFL promised to do so, they broke their promise. Therefore, some black workers decided to found their own trade union. A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen made the attempt. They published the journal "Messenger". The influence of the October Revolution was also significant here. In 1918 the "National Association for Promotion of Labor Unity among Negroes" was founded. Later, after a hard struggle, the "Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters", the only strong negro trade union, was established.

The negroes, who had been employed in the factories during World War One, were dismissed again after the war. Unemployment of negroes was very great in the Northern States. The few who still had a job were dismissed in 1929. After 1929 practically all the negroes had lost their jobs. The whole working class had to suffer much during the thirties, but among the negroes the misery was most oppressive.

The struggle for solidarity of the working class began with great emphasis in the thirties. It is one of the merits of the Communist Party of the USA that it was always in the vanguard of this struggle. The Communist Party of the USA was the only force which struggled for the rights of the negroes in the whole country. Based on the teachings of Marxism-Leninism the party had a clear understanding of the fact that the negroes in America had special problems. Therefore the party played a great part in seeing to it that the large majority of the negroes started to fight for their rights in these years. Supported by the party the negroes began to organize and to take up the fight for their right to work. In 1936 only 100,000 negroes were organized in trade unions, but in 1940 their number was already half a million. In 1945 one million and a quarter were members of the trade unions, and today this number has risen to two and a half millions.

The "Congress of Industrial Organizations" (CIO) was founded in 1936. All founders were members of the left wing of the AFL. There were many communists amongst them. They did not intend to found a new trade union organization for they knew how important the unity of the working class was. They demanded, as did the IWW, that the AFL at long last start organizing all the workers, black and white, men and women, skilled workers and industrial proletariat. But the executive kept on refusing to do so. Therefore, they could do nothing else but found the CIO.

From the very beginning the CIO set itself the task of organizing the workers in all industries. Some industries were already employing black workers at that time. 90,000 black workers were employed in the steel industry and none at all in the motor car industry. But wherever negroes worked, they always had the most menial jobs. The white workers had to be convinced that negroes also had to be enrolled in the

trade unions. On the other hand, the black workers had to be won for the trade unions - up to that time they had not had any good experience with trade unions.

The "National Negro Congress", founded in 1936, played a role in overcoming these problems. The Congress was a united front organization of the negroes against fascism and oppression. It was supported by many progressive people. Of course, members of the Communist Party were active in the Congress. One of the tasks the Congress set itself was to convince black workers to become members of the trade unions. By means of the "National Negro Congress" the CIO was successful, and many negroes enrolled in the CIO. But their number was still relatively small because negroes could get a job in factories only with great difficulty.

The situation improved as late as during World War Two. The manpower shortage, especially after 1941, brought more economic freedom for the majority of the negroes than any other event since the Civil War. In 1940 more than one million negroes were still unemployed. In 1944 negroes were employed in almost all industries. In 1945 there were 1,250,000 black members in the trade unions. But the negroes had to go on doing the most menial jobs.

After the war the rapid growth in the number of black trade union members decreased. The policy of cold war and anti-communism resulted in the progressive trade unions being expelled from the CIO. The democratic trade unions had already been expelled at the time the AFL and the CIO amalgamated.

Today nearly all working class negroes are members of the trade unions. The fact that the American working class was divided for so long was promoted and exploited by the ruling class. This policy of division was supported by the "American Federation of Labor". But there were always men and women who fought against it. The Marxists can be proud of the fact that they always struggled for the unity of the working class movement. The first among them were Joseph Weydemeyer and other adherents of Marx, and during the hardest struggles of the American working class in the thirties it was the Communist Party of the USA.

The fight has not been won yet by a long way. Now the task is to implement the equality of the negroes in the trade unions. It is the younger generation of negroes especially, who is no longer prepared to leave the leadership in the hands of white trade union officials alone. It demands, and that rightly, that in all the trade unions, but especially in those where negroes are in the majority, negroes also take over leading offices. This struggle is only beginning. It goes without saying that the Communist Party of the USA supports this demand. It will be a long and hard struggle. The party can be proud that it has always struggled for the rights of the negroes.

HORST IHDE

The Negro Renaissance and Paul Robeson's Development as an Actor and Singer

Although in an interview with the Daily Worker in 1960 Robeson said that his twelve years in England had shaped his mind in a decisive manner[1], he emphasized on another occasion that: "... my career as an artist in America and abroad, my participation in public life, the views which I hold today - all have their roots in the early years..."[2].

The artist, who was born in Princeton, New Jersey, on April 9, 1898, spent his childhood and adolescent years during a period of important economic, social and cultural change among the coloured population of the United States when the great migration of the negroes from the South to the North iniated a whole chain of effects. For centuries the great mass of negroes had lived in the Southern States, while only a small, mainly urban minority could be found in the north, and up until the First World War this state of affairs did not change to any significant extent. Apart from individual cases, the migration of the Afro-Americans took place only within narrow limits and unchanged living conditions. Only when many negroes moved from the southern plantations to the northern industrial centres, did this picture change.

The economic situation of the coloured labourers or share-croppers in the South was completely insecure as the dependence on the cotton crop involved incessant fluctuations. Soil exhaustion meant that hopes of good harvests were illusionary and, since most of the farms were deep in debt, even minor failures were apt to have widespread

effects of an calamitous significance. The appearence of the boll weevil, introduced from Mexico at about the turn of the century, for example, was a catastrophe for the cotton planters.

The southern towns had little to offer the black workers in an economic sense and the only road open to them, therefore, was the trek to the northern industrial centres. The booming war industry attracted the plantation workers and agents of the northern industrial enterprises lured cheap labour to the north with empty promises. In 1916 the Pittsburgh heavy industries hired some 15,000 workers from the south and thereby started the avalanche.[3] Just as Robeson's father had, as a lad of 15 years, run away from his slave-owner in North Carolina prior to the outbreak of the Civil War in order to settle in the free Northern States, so tens of thousands of poverty-stricken coloured farm labourers sought relative freedom in the northern towns during the first quarter of our century. The large groups of negroes who set themselves up in the centres drew others behind them. Robeson's father, who had become a parson in Princetown, was joined by many of his relatives and friends from North Carolina during the years of the great northern trek and young Paul soon found himself surrounded by a great number of his close relations who adopted him into their collective after the early death of his mother.

To a negro the North meant not only the fulfilment of his economic desires but also escape from the discrimination and violence which were then once again in the ascent. During the First World War the number of Afro-Americans lynched in the USA was 199 while between 1919 and 1922 as many as 239 coloured citizens were massacred by the white-skinned murder gangs.[4] Soldiers with a dark skin were treated just as savagely and infamously in the army as in civil life. On their return from the war some of them were lynched in their southern home towns before they were even able to take off the uniforms in which they had fought for democracy and liberty.

The north-bound trek of the negroes swelled the proletariat in the industrial regions. While in 1900 only about 2 million Afro-Americans were city-dwellers, the number had doubled by 1925[5] and the negro population was maturing into an economic and political factor of considerable significance and beginning to realize its strength. Under the spiritual leadership of William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868-1963), that great man who later became Robeson's friend and comrade-in-arms, the Niagara Movement was founded in 1905. In 1909 this became the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), an organization founded by negroes and whites with the purpose of improving the lot of the Afro-Americans in the United States by legal means. Du Bois was elected Director of Publicity Work for this new association and was charged with the task of editing the periodical "The Crisis" which was founded in 1910. This scholar and writer developed the journal into a mass-circulation paper which had, by 1918, reached a monthly circulation of 100,000 copies[6] and formed, in those years, the main platform of the struggle for civil liberties.

Up to that time no negro leader had found a basis from which the coloured people could be organized. Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) was the first organizer who addressed the masses of the urban proletariat and filled them with enthusiasm for his aims. This negro, who was born in Jamaica, founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association which, after 1917, quickly gained popularity and spread throughout the entire USA. Garvey identified the problems of the American negroes with colonialism in Africa and coined the slogan for the movement: "Return to Africa!"

Garvey was strongly influenced by Booker T. Washington's autobiography "Up from Slavery" (1901) and by the author's petty-bourgeois ideology. Pride in race and the concept of African nationalism were inseparably linked in Garvey's philosophical approach, and his unrelenting efforts to popularize the proud heritage of the negroes and their African homeland led to the aspirations of the so-called New Negroes which found artistic expression in the Negro Renaissance of the 'twenties.

The concentration of negroes in the towns brought about an ever expanding intellectual and artistic cultural movement and there emerged a stratum of coloured intellectuals and artists, many of whom had come directly from the ranks of the proletariat

and had, despite the impact of the ruling white culture, remained in close touch with the masses of the negro population. The progressive representatives of this group rediscovered the treasures of their cultural heritage and made use of the folklore of their ancestors to consolidate and strengthen their own racial consciousness.

In the evolution of culture among the Afro-Americans the black ghetto in New York played an outstanding role. As this most densely populated city in the USA had already become the recognized centre of art and literature, it seemed quite natural that the black musicians, painters and writers from the South should settle there. Harlem became the undisputed metropole of coloured America and the versatile James Weldon Johnson (1871 - 1938), whose well-known Negro Hymn later formed part of Robeson's repertoire, was one of the trail-blazers of the Harlem Renaissance. In 1917 Johnson published his first collection of poems and in 1922 the "Book of American Negro Poetry" which also contained contemporary poems. The two volumes of Negro Spirituals (1925/1926) published in co-operation with his brother J. Rosamond Johnson also helped to arouse wide interest in the then still underrated treasures of negro culture.

A circle established in Harlem included such writers as Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen and Walter White, all of whose works were protests against the oppression and discrimination of the Afro-Americans. These writers sought to strengthen the pride of their people and they consciously based their work on the folk-art of the negroes. The most outstanding member of this group was Langston Hughes (1902-1967) who expressed their aims in 1926, writing: "Let Paul Robeson singing Water Boy, and Rudolph Fisher writing about the streets of Harlem, and Jean Toomer holding the heart of Georgia in his hands, and Aaron Douglas drawing strange black fantasies cause the smug Negro middle class to turn from their white, respectable, ordinary books and papers to catch a glimmer of their own beauty. We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves..."[7)]

Hughes gave poetic expression to the feeling of racial pride and of awareness of the negro's own strength in his poem, "I Too Sing America", which he wrote in 1925. In it he used these visionary words:

"Tomorrow,
I'll sit at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
'Eat in the kitchen',
Then,
Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed, -
I, too, am America." [8)]

The Negro Renaissance, however, would have been of little significance had it not aroused the interest and to a certain extent the well-meaning support of white artists and intellectuals. Interest in the negroes had begun to develop rapidly since the First World War as the process of economic crises and forebodings about the end of the bourgeois social system made many people look for new values. Many artists realized, to their consternation, the dubious nature and the brittleness of American post-war society and more than ever before they felt crushed by technology and alienated from their environment. Even Hemingway (1899-1961), in his novel, "The Sun also Rises" (Fiesta, 1926), allowed his heroes to find the rest and relaxation, which they had looked for in vain in turbulent Paris, while touring the Spanish mountains. Some artists compared the hectic atmosphere of the imperialist era in which the individual seemed almost totally isolated with the negroes whom the white cultural workers identified with that purity and desirable primitiveness which had for so long been lost to the whites because of the steady spread of industrialization and the commercialization of every aspect of life. The negroes lived in a different manner from the whites and seemed to be in possession of experiences unknown to the ordinary American man and so the black man's life, his art and the primitive society from which he had sprung were investigated and praised. Through this tribute to the primitive, the

artists also wanted to express their opposition to the business-ridden world and the technicized life of bourgeois society. Many people viewed jazz as a successful attempt to express healthy primitiveness and after the turn of the century it embarked on a triumphal tour across North America and by the 'twenties its best interpreters had introduced it into Europe as well. The appreciation of jazz, however, was only one aspect of the general attention being paid to Afro-American culture in this period as the negro became an important and interesting subject for literature too.

As early as 1914, Vachel Lindsay (1879-1931) had written a poem, "The Congo", subtitled "A Study of the Negro Race", in which he made the independent minds of the negroes and their homeland his theme. In 1922 Clement Wood, an otherwise unknown author, published his novel "Nigger" which describes the vicissitudes of a negro family from the end of the Civil War until the First World War. Artistically the book is not of a very high standard but it has literary significance because its protagonists are, without exception, Afro-Americans. Wood tried to depict the harsh and poverty-ridden life of a negro family from the South who had migrated to a northern industrial centre with its multifarious problems. The characters in the book are all members of the exploited class towards whom the author displays great sympathy. In his work Wood paved the way not only for white but also for other dark-skinned authors to deal with similar subjects and problems. Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941) for example, in his novel "Dark Laughter" (1925), glorified the "instinct-motivated black people" who, however, play no major role in the work itself. The novel "Porgy" by Du Bose Heyward (1885-1940) describes the life of the poverty-stricken negro population in Charleston but in a romanticised and glorified light. Such a sentimental novel would have been quickly forgotten had the stage version of the book not been awarded the 1927 Pulitzer Prize and Gershwin's opera "Porgy and Bess" (1935) which was based on the novel, brought further fame to the writer.

Closely linked with the Negro Renaissance is the name of a white writer who did more for the young negro artists, including Robeson, than all the other people who were interested in or supported them. Carl Van Vechten (1880-1964) had already made a name for himself as a music and theatre critic when he took up writing in the early 'twenties. Although most of his work is by no means memorable, his novel "Nigger Heaven", published in 1926, retains its value as an historic document. While practically all the white critics enthusiastically welcomed its publication, many negroes were strongly critical of it, feeling particularly insulted by the title. Von Vechten's forte is his lively description of the life of coloured people in Harlem. He does not attempt to depict the arduous and monotonous existence of the simple people but concentrates rather on the places where the black bourgeoisie and middle classes go for entertainment. "Nigger Heaven" was the most successful novel on negroes by a white author and aroused, although primarily through its over-emphasis on the exotic and sensual, the interest of the white bourgeoisie in Harlem's nightlife. In addition, the book stimulated various coloured writers to engage in similar ventures.

Incomparably more important for the introduction of the modern negro as a literary figure were, however, Eugene O'Neill's (1888-1953) early works. In many of his plays this dramatist tried to present, in dramatic form, the feelings that are dormant in the subconscious mind and frequently limited himself to depicting the inner thoughts of his heroes. Although his rejection of the real external world with its social confrontations and conflicts partly marred his earlier works, he did pioneering work for American literature by introducing serious negro characters. In his one-act play "Thirst", written in 1914, for example, a mulatto was among the characters and in "The Moon of the Caribbees" (1918) he describes the primitive life of seamen and the indigenous people on a West Indian island. In "Emperor Jones", in which Robeson played the part of Brutus Jones, the audience witnesses the downfall of an American negro, a former sleeping-car conductor and prisoner who appoints himself ruler of a tiny West Indian island and is eventually shot in the jungle by his subjects while trying to escape. By introducing African drums as background music and by taking the hero back to the African time of his ancestors, O'Neill tried to conjure up the exotic and romantic

atmosphere of the negroes' African heritage.

One of O'Neill's best plays of this period is "All God's Chillun Got Wings" (1924) in which he treats the problem of a mixed marriage between a negro and a white woman. Although, in the author's eyes, such a relationship cannot come to a happy end and must inevitably be destroyed by the racial difference, O'Neill's attempt must be classified as a courageous act. A white woman in the play kisses a negro's hand and as a result reactionary forces in New York, led by the Lord Mayor, tried to prevent the staging of the play, while the author himself was threatened by the Ku Klux Klan.

The growing interest in Afro-Americans during this period, made it possible for at least a few outstanding negro actors to play serious roles. Since the end of the Civil War coloured actors had been playing roles in so-called minstrel shows and in variety theatres as comedians and cheap jesters but after the turn of the century and particularly in the course of the Negro Renaissance negro comedians had already conquered the Broadway theatres and had aroused a considerable stir with their musicals and revues not only at home but also while on tour in foreign countries.

One of the well-known coloured actors of these years was Charles Gilpin who in 1919 performed with great success in the play "Abraham Lincoln" by the English playwright John Drinkwater (1882-1937). One year later he took the title role in O'Neill's "Emperor Jones" and with his performance set new standards for the presentation of serious roles by negro actors. Although Robeson was able to learn a great deal from his widely-popular idol, he was, nevertheless, also faced with the task of at least equalling such a great accomplishment.

Paul Robeson went to New York in February 1920 to finish his law studies and immediately settled in Harlem. The famous sportsman who had graduated from Rutgers University with great distinction soon became well known in the New York negro ghetto, and Eslanda Robeson wrote in her husband's biography: "His unaffected friendliness, his natural tact, his great gift for 'mixing', his real interest in everyone, soon made him 'one of the boys'. No matter how great his achievements then or later, his easy good-natured simplicity kept him from being regarded with awe; his many friends always felt that he was one of themselves who was doing great things, rather than that he was some far removed celebrity."[9)]

While in Harlem Robeson made his début in an insignificant play and then in 1922 he had a part in "Taboo", a weak but typical play of this period by Mary Hoyt Wiborg which featured the pagan traditions of the negroes within a framework of jazz and African dancing and singing. The play was a failure and after this digression Robeson immediately returned to his studies without giving any serious thought to an artistic career. In 1923 he finished his legal studies but found that it was difficult even for a highly-qualified negro to obtain employment commensurate with his qualifications and inclinations. Eventually he was offered an interesting position in an influential white lawyers' office but despite promising prospects he soon left the profession because he could not bear the discrimination and humiliation inflicted by his white colleagues. He had no doubts therefore about accepting an offer to act in two of O'Neill's plays at the Provincetown Theatre.

Between 1915 and 1929 the Provincetown Players were a progressive bourgeois group which comprised outstanding artists and writers such as John Reed (1887-1920), Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) and Eugene O'Neill. The small theatre company, which had found a home in Greenwich Village, the artists' quarter of New York, was basically different from the Broadway theatres which operated on a purely commercial basis for the Provincetown Players wrote and produced their plays for the mere pleasure of acting and experimenting without trying to evade critical social problems. Robeson was immediately enthused by the creative spirit of these theatre devotees and held long discussions with O'Neill and his friends on the aims and significance of dramatic art. Paul took the leading part in "Emperor Jones" and "All God's Chillun Got Wings", and the enthusiastic critics paid high tribute to his great acting ability. The author, who was deeply impressed by Robeson's interpretations, presented him his collected plays with this dedication: "In gratitude to Paul Robeson, in whose interpretation of Brutus Jones I have found the most complete satisfaction an author can get -

that of seeing his creation born into flesh and blood; and in whose creation of Jim Harris in my 'All God's Chillun Got Wings' I found not only complete fidelity to my intent under trying circumstances, but, beyond that, true understanding and racial integrity. Again with gratitude and friendship. - Eugene O'Neill, 1925". [10]

In all these years Robeson was completely under the ideological influence of the Harlem Renaissance, and the critic Alexander Woollcott commented on May 8, 1924, in a review of "Emperor Jones" that: "Robeson brings to the play a more primitive strength, a broader stroke of tone and gesture, a greater tumult of the immemorial fears which this voodoo play invokes from the deeps." [11]

While the athlete-actor played the part of "Emperor Jones" with all his physical beauty and exotic primitiveness, displaying inimitable dramatic intensity, his leading role in "All God's Chillun Got Wings" gave him an opportunity to present a coloured man as the partner of white men at the same or a higher level of emotion and experience. A contemporary critic might regard Jim Harris, the hero of this drama, as a weakling or a man of unrealistic humility. In this role acted Robeson without reservations in the spirit of the limited aims of the negro movement of that time, aims which were expressed in these words: "If I can make them (the white audience, H.I.) realise fully the pitiful struggle of Jim Harris and reduce them to tears for him at the end - weeping because a Negro has suffered - I will have done something to make them realise, even if only subconsciously and for a few moments, that Negroes are the same kind of people they themselves are, suffer as they suffer, weep as they weep; that all this arbitrary separation because of colour is unimportant - that we are all human beings." [12]

Robeson's career as a singer is inseparably linked with his acting both in time and in terms of his personal development. In order to give even wider scope to his wonderfully warm und full voice, the director introduced a spiritual into the play "Emperor Jones" which Robeson sang in the jungle while fleeing from his pursuers. With this the foundation was laid for Robeson's career as a singer and on Sunday, April 19, 1925, he gave his first concert at the theatre of the Provincetown Players. Apart from two items, the programme consisted of negro folksongs.

The work songs and secular songs came from the people themselves and their writers and composers remained anonymous. The tunes had strengthened the slaves' determination to survive and had given them a certain measure of joy and self-respect but over and beyond this they had also raised the collective spirit of the opressed class. The slave spirituals which Robeson sang were also genuine folksongs whose words and music were created, altered and supplemented by the collective. The opressed negroes had used revivalist hymns and other elements of "white" music as raw material for their grave and partly openly rebellious songs but the black singers and composers transformed the sober evangelical hymns into exciting and rousing rhythms and filled the parables of the Bible with new life. Some of the spirituals with their seemingly pious words from the Holy Scriptures are ambiguous; thus in the spiritual "Steal Away", sung by Robeson, the reference to the liberation from bondage of the enslaved Afro-Americans is easily discernible. In many other spirituals too, the black man expressed his personal emotions and hopes in a more or less open way. "Go down Moses", a spiritual which Robeson sang at his first concert, had helped the slaves in their preparations to escape to the free North. As former slaves recalled, that heroic freedom fighter Harriet Tubman, was identical with the figure of Moses in the spiritual while the illegal arrival of this woman who had liberated hundreds of negroes from slavery, was signalled before the Civil War by the singing of this melody.

Robeson, of course, was not the first do discover this rich cultural heritage. Beginning in 1871 a negro choir from Fisk University in Tennessee had won audiences in the USA and subsequently in Europe by singing negro spirituals. Following this example, other negro colleges established choirs and systematically cultivated and performed these songs. Robeson, however, was the first soloist to devote a whole programme to these songs. In his capacity as a vocalist, too, the paramount aim of the artist was to arouse the understanding and sympathy of white audiences for the negroes' plight. [13] Although the young ar-

tist at this stage of his development had already been convinced of the educational function of his art, he still lacked the challenging, rebellious and militant approach which distinguished his later artistry. During this period Robeson still conformed on all major issues to the demands and aims of the petty-bourgeois nationalist Harlem Renaissance which viewed the negro question as just a racial problem and whose members were able to recognize problems but whose limited bourgeois ideology prevented them from offering any practical solutions.

In the summer of 1925 Robeson and his young wife travelled together to London where he was to play the leading role in "Emperor Jones", the play in which he had made a name for himself in the United States. The English welcomed the coloured actor, whose fame had long since spread to their country, with great hospitality and cordiality. From 1927 to 1937 Robeson made London his permanent home and toured all Europe giving concerts. The American negro felt at home in England and loved the cosmopolitan atmosphere of London, particularly because here, in contrast to the land of his birth, he was not compelled to live in a ghetto nor did any racial discrimination exist in the circles in which as a world-famous star he was able to mix. This happy time in England wag significant for Robeson in a totally different sense, however.

During the first phase of his artistic work, Robeson never really broke through the narrow barriers of black nationalism, and looking back he stated in an article written in 1951: "All through my youth - in my mind and in fact - I was a part of a large family, a family to which I was responsible. And this family stretched out from Harlem to Washington ... all across the nation - wherever the Negro people lived and struggled. My songs were the songs of my people - for five years I would sing no others." [14]

But Robeson's field of vision widened. He sought and found contact with the common people and admitted in an interview with a London paper in 1960: "I came here unshaped. Great parts of my working class roots are here." [15]

During the great economic crisis of the thirties, Robeson took the side of the striking workers whom he now recognised as allies of the oppressed negroes in his home. He took his art to the exploited class and placed his genius completely at the service of the working class. Recalling that period he wrote: "I gave up two years of my time then - way back in 1936-37 - to help build workers' theatres in Great Britain, to help develop a working class culture in the full meaning of that term." [16]

His co-operation with the English workers helped Robeson extricate himself from his nationalist tendencies. In London, which at that time was the centre of the imperialist world, he came into contact with people of all races and from all continents. He held discussions not only with students and intellectuals from Africa but in the London Docks he also met African seamen whose ideology differed in no way from that of their English counterparts.

From this newly-won outlook, his African heritage presented itself in a completly different light and, although Robeson had from the very beginning of his artistic career been concerned with the folklore of the Afro-Americans, it was only then, some ten years later, that the interrelation between African culture and American negro art became completely clear in his mind. In his autobiography he refers to this development in these terms: "I came to see the roots of my own people's culture, especially in our music which is still the richest and most healthy in America." [17]

Through his dedication to negro folk-art which, as an integral part of the culture of an oppressed race, was necessarily revolutionary in spirit, there opened up for Robeson an almost inexhaustible source of artistic inspiration. He became increasingly conscious that the spiritual and revolutionary potential of this folklore had to be placed at the service of the class struggle waged by the proletariat. Robeson was a politically mature singer when, while still living in England, he discovered the beauty of the folk-songs of the British Isles and he confesses in his autobiography: "And as I sang these lovely melodies I felt that they, too, were close to my heart and expressed the same soulful quality that I knew in Negro music." [18]

In the thirties Robeson became increasingly aware of the international links and common cause beetween exploited people

throughout the world and this enable him to express even more successfully than previously the emotions and hopes of the common man. From this time onwards, he devoted himself seriously to studying the folk-songs of various peoples and he resumed the language studies he had begun earlier now in order to be able to sing the songs in the language of the country of their origin. During the subsequent years Robeson constantly enlarged his repertoire by including folk-songs and 'lieder' from various nations. In his interpretations progressive songs such as the "Thaelmann Column", the "Song of the Peatbog Soldiers" or the song of the immortal Joe Hill, which was his special favourite, obtained new significance. The artist identified himself completely with the revolutionary content of such militant songs and through them expressed his personal attitude.

Robeson's interest in the culture of the African countries chained by imperialism led him to compare them with the situation in the Soviet Union where previously oppressed and underdeveloped nations had, within less than two decades, developed from tribal society to modern socialist society. In 1934 the artist visited the Soviet Union for the first time and gathered impressions which were decisive for his further development. Before the infamous Committee for Un-American Activities, which crossexamined him in 1956, he declared: "In Russia I felt for the first time like a full human being - no color prejudice like in Mississippi, no color prejudice like in Washington."[19)]

The process of Robeson's artistic development and maturing political understanding were also determined by his growing grasp of the inhuman role of fascism. In 1933 the actor played in London in a special performance of "All God's Chillun Got Wings", the takings of which he donated to the first Jewish refugees who had escaped the fascist terror in Germany. In 1934 Robeson and his friends were assaulted by Hitler's brown shirts in Berlin, an event which made a deep impression on his mind. He recognized then, as he later said in a radio broadcast: "that the struggle for Negro rights was an inseparable part of the anti-fascist struggle."[20)]

Robeson was, however, never content just to voice his theoretical opinions; he invariably placed his entire art and personality at the service of the principles he recognized as just. It was this which lay behind his decision in 1938 to go to Spain and to use his songs in the support of the democratic forces fighting reaction and fascism. His experiences in the anti-fascist struggle decided Robeson to return to the United States in 1939 in order to promote, together with the American workers, the cause of the working people in the land of his birth.

Robeson's increased responsibility as an actor had already manifested itself in his interpretation of Othello, which had secured for him a triumphal success in the London of 1930. Although Shakespeare's great tragedy had long fascinated him, he had delayed for a considerable time until he felt sufficiently mature to tackle such a demanding role. Robeson spared neither time nor effort preparing himself for the part. He studied the English language of Shakespeare's time, read phonetic works and sought advice in detailed discussions with the most expert scholars in the field. Just before the first night he said to a reporter from the "New York Times": "I have read virtually everything of Shakespeare... Now that I know the English people and really understand what their country means to them, now that I am in touch with the English spirit, I feel I can play Othello."[21)]

For the 1943 Broadway production of "Othello" the actor once again studied the drama in detail and worked out for himself the meaning of every word, every gesture. He completely indentified himself with Shakespeare's tragic hero and presented a man who does not murder his wife because of blind jealousy but who is driven to killing her when his noblest feelings and human dignity have been trampled underfoot. With this performance Robeson reached the climax of his fame as an actor. In New York the drama reached 296 performances, breaking any previous record for a Shakespeare play.[22)] By his acting on stage and in films the artist reached sections of the population he could never have touched as a singer and for this reason he remained faithful to the stage and the spoken word.

Despite his great success as an actor, Robeson showed partioular interest in and affection for singing. His matured political understanding of the social implicati-

ons of his art gave his singing a new quality. According to his lifelong friend and accompanist Lawrence Brown, Robeson reached the climax of his singing career in the post-war years from 1945 to 1947.[23] During that time, but particularly during the involuntary break in the fifties, the artist made an intensive study of the theoretical issues of the origin of folk-songs[24] and developed the thesis that nearly all music in the world stems from old and original folk music.[25] This conclusion, however daring it may seem, was bound to have been reached by the singer who had studied the folk-songs of so many nations, for all of them constitute some part of the culture of the oppressed classes in those countries.

The workers and peasants whose toil and sweat laid the foundations of all culture in all countries, also established the preconditions for intellectual and cultural life. The creative talents of the popular masses have found expression in folklore and especially in song. To varying degrees the exploited classes were excluded from the culture of the ruling classes and therefore developed their own folklore in which they were able to become active as human beings and personalities. Since this folklore has its roots in similar or even identical conditions and experiences in every country, the great similarity in the motifs of the folk-songs of the various nations comes as no surprise.

In his modesty Robeson once said about himself: "I am only a folk-singer."[26] This statement, with its manifold implications, indeed applies to this great artist. From an actor and singer, blessed by nature, whose career began under the impact of the bourgeois-nationalist Negro Renaissance, Paul Robeson developed into a genuine folk artist who became the voice of his people and the conscience of oppressed peoples all over the world. From an advocate of racial equality and the beauty of black people he matured, in the course of the class struggles of the thirties, into a revolutionary whose art and personal example were instrumental in paving the way for the revolutionary revival of the negroes in the USA during the present militant epoch.

Paul Robeson has, like Angela Davis, become for millions of people throughout the world the symbol of the other America. Although the folk-singer and the philosophy lecturer are separated by nearly 50 years, they are united by their joint belief in the strength of the people, their insurmountable steadfastness and the certainty of the triumph of a new, a better social order in the United States of America too.

Notes:

1) "Daily Worker", Jan.1, London, 1960
2) Robeson, P.: "Mein Lied - meine Waffe" ("Here I Stand"), translated by G.F. Alexan, Berlin, 1958, p.67
3) Bartens, D.: "Die Nordwanderung der Neger in USA. Gründe und Auswirkungen", Dissertation, Berlin, 1936, p.16
4) Foster, W.Z.: "The Negro People in American History", New York, 1954, p.440
5) Woofter, T.J. jr: "Negro Problems in Cities", Garden City, New York, 1928, p.17
6) Franklin, J.H.: "From Slavery to Freedom, A History of Negro Americans", 3d ed., Vintage Books, New York, 1969, p.447
7) Hughes, L.: "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain", in "The Nation" XXII (June 23, 1926), in "Negro Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century", ed. by Francis L. Broderick and August Meier, Indianopolis, New York, Kansas City, p. 96 et seq.
8) "Auch ich bin Amerika", Dichtungen amerikanischer Neger, translated by Stephan Hermlin, Berlin, 1948, p.49
9) Robeson, E.G.: "Paul Robeson, Negro", London, 1930, p.68
10) ibid.p.79
11) "Sun", May 8,1924
12) Robeson, E.G.:, op.cit., p.85
13) ibid.
14) "Freedom", New York, vol. 1, Nr. 4 (April 1951)
15) "Daily Worker", op.cit.
16) "Freedom", op.cit.
17) Paul Robeson, op.cit., p.76
18) ibid. p.95
19) ibid. p.93
20) ibid. p.98
21) Quoted by Marie Seton: "Paul Robeson", London, 1958, p.53
22) ibid. p.154
23) ibid. p.168
24) See, for example, his article "Pesni Moego Naroda", in "Sovietskaya Muzyka" 7/1949, pp. 100-105

25) Robeson, P.: "Gedanken über Musik", in "Musik und Gesellschaft", vol. 8, Nr. 4, 1958, p.209

26) Quoted by Martha Dodd: "Paul Robeson", in "Mainstream", vol. 16, No. 5 (May 1963), p.56

DIANA LOESER

Robeson's Contribution to British Working-Class Culture

In the GDR we are fortunate in having a cultural programme which can guide contemporary artists and writers in all the fields of cultural activity in their task to create a new culture. At the same time workers are encouraged to become familiar with the cultural heritage. At present there is a lively discussion being carried on in the press on cultural questions ranging from "Why should a worker in the Kirov works, Leipzig, read Goethe's 'Faust'?" to the latest television serial on Artur Becker, or the film "Die rote Kapelle" ("The Red Orchestra").

In the thirties when Paul Robeson was developing as an artist, the first socialist country, the Soviet Union, led the struggle for a new culture and the preservation of the cultural heritage from fascism. The programmes of the international congresses on culture in the thirties were of vital significance for the conscious development of, for example, anti-fascist literature, and working class culture in every country, particularly in the European countries and the USA. The idea in Friedrich Wolf's essay 'Kunst ist Waffe' was popularised and taken up consciously by many artists. Robeson became part of this international cultural movement. Robeson himself often spoke of art as a weapon in the struggle for peace, social justice and socialism and his contribution to world culture is greater because he understood this and made it a central feature of his own creative work as an artist. No one can describe this better than Robeson himself: "Again and again I said that the masters of arts will fail to hide in ivory towers from the Nazi pestilence. Those who in those years preached pure art, an art unmixed with policy, served fascism; they betrayed their peoples, played into the hands of the enemies of freedom and democracy. Art is our weapon, I said, my weapon was my voice."

How did Robeson try to carry out this idea of art as a weapon in the struggle? If we examine the concert programmes of Robeson throughout the period after the mid thirties until his retirement we can observe that he sang negro spirituals and work songs. Not only did he elevate them to the concert platform, but he took away their "Uncle Tom ideology of quaintness" singing them as they were meant to be sung as the conscious expression of the misery and cruelty suffered by the Negro people and their determination to fight back. British workers, who it must be remembered had been among the first capitalist nations to be subjected to the full force of imperialist ideology of national chauvinism and the superiority of the white races, came to sing Negro songs. They understood Robeson's message, that there was a common bond between the exploited whether black or white. Not all of them understood the full meaning of Robeson's call to not only fight against their exploitation but for a new society. Nevertheless, he gave them a feeling of courage and strength in adversity which heartened them in the bitter struggles of the thirties. This was an important contribution to British working class culture, to give his audiences a feeling of solidarity with his black brothers, to give them renewed strength for the struggle. Would "John Brown's Body" have stayed in the forefront of marching songs without Robeson?

But Robeson's second great contribution was to educate his audience. His repertoire included not only Negro spirituals and work songs but classical Lieder, folk songs, political songs of various periods in history and international working class songs of struggle. He sought his audiences and he understood the class character of his audiences. This desire to educate his audiences came after his visit to the Soviet Union. He writes himself that after his visit to the SU in 1934 he returned to England and looked at England with new eyes: "At that time I learned for myself. I began to study

the society I was living in for finding the right way of struggle for the equality of peoples. To imagine life without this struggle was impossible for me. I gave concerts in various towns of England, I sang for the rich and the poor. When critically examining my audiences I noticed that there was a deep gap between the ones and the others. The white working people suffered as much as the negroes in the South. There was neither contempt nor hatred against me in their eyes."

Robeson began to educate his audience systematically, he never sang down to his worker audiences but on the contrary his concerts were of the very best. He introduced his audiences consciously to the great cultural heritage of classical music and popular music. His concert programmes were carefully balanced mixtures of spirituals and work songs, folk songs, hymns, all the best of the popular cultural heritage, classical Lieder especially of Russian composers and the international working class songs of struggle. If Robeson had simply wanted to educate his audiences to understand an appreciate classical and popular music he would have done something useful. But he would not have been very original or revolutionary in his work as an artist. Quite a number of intellectuals in Britain worried by the incursion of admass culture into cultural life and attempting to fight against it have in the style of dogooders attempted to ward off the enemy by preaching good culture to the poor.

What is different about Robeson? The clue lies in his political development. When he was the lion of London society Shaw met him at a reception and asked him what he thought of socialism. Robeson himself says, "I hadn't anything to say. I'd never really thought about socialism." Five years later Robeson made his first trip to the Soviet Union, the great impression it made upon him is well known and his subsequent visits to the Soviet Union were milestones in his political development. But it was through his interest in Russian culture and Soviet culture that Robeson came to understand the political problems and the place of art in the struggle for a better society, socialism. His understanding of the role of culture in society and culture in history stems from his studies of Russian and Soviet culture in the thirties.

He came to understand that it was not sufficient to educate his audiences to appreciate culture in itself but to educate them to struggle, to show them the real revolutionary character of art. Art as a weapon to liberate mankind. Robeson never made the mistake of applying his thesis in a narrow sectarian manner, which some of his contemporaries did in Britain. He understood the power of true art to inspire the people for their struggle. Robeson's concerts are evidence of how well Robeson understood this. Particularly in his later years he often introduced his songs explaining them to the audience. Here again he understood the growing influence of admass, the lack of cultural education and the need to find ways of helping the audience to understand his message, to show them real culture not the ersatz rubbish which late bourgeois culture produced. Robeson never ceased to defend the Soviet Union against attack, regardless of the cost. The writer of the programme notes to his 1960 tour quotes Robeson:"'Here' (in the SU), remarked Robeson to Eisenstein before he left, 'I am not a Negro but a human being'. It was a feeling which Robeson was never to forget or deny, no matter what the cost."

Robeson educated his audiences to struggle for the liberation of mankind. He sang the great Soviet "Song of the Fatherland" with its fine opening lines: "Soviet land so dear to every toiler" at many of his concerts. The significance of his approach to culture from the revolutionary standpoint is much greater than this short contribution can show. His greatest contribution was to educate his audiences in proletarian internationalism to honour and defend the SU.

Robeson would wholeheartedly approve of the discussion with the Kirov workers who read "Faust" and the Oktober Club songs about life today in the GDR. It is not an accident, therefore, that we should honour Robeson, one of the great pioneers in the struggle for working class culture, not only in Britain but internationally.

DIETLIND KRAUSE

Paul Robeson's Political Development and its Effect on him as a Singer

Paul Robeson, that great, smiling, lovable man is said to have the best natural bass voice of our time. It is a voice difficult to describe - mature, warm and powerful while at the same time embracing everything technically necessary - perfect timing and wonderful pronounciation. All this is imbued with Robeson's spirit and makes him a singer whose singing enraptures his audiences and penetrates to their innermost emotions.

When he started on his artistic career he concentrated on negro spirituals but at his later concerts he added Lieder by Schubert, Bach, Beethoven, Dvořak and many others.

In 1928 the Robesons moved to London. Paul at first sung to the wealthy but later he mixed with other sections of the people, such as the London dockers. He had many discussions with them and became increasingly familiar with Marxist thought. He became aware of the unbridgeable gap between the rich and the poor and examing these problems more deeply he realised that while in the United States it was the whites who oppressed the black people, in Great Britain white people were being exploited by other whites and that the issue, therefore, was not a racial one but primarily a question of classes.

He was aware of the existence of a country in which such class antagonisms no longer existed and in 1934 he decided to visit the Soviet Union. There he made the aquaintance of the Soviet people and experienced their humanism. His visit to that great land of socialism greatly widened his political horizon.

Paul Robeson began to supplement and even alter his repertoire. He sang the songs of other nations as well as freedom songs. As he once said himself, he placed his art at the service of the people. In addition to English songs, he sang French, Russian, Yiddish, Chinese, Hebrew ones as well as the folk-songs of many other peoples.

From this time on he also changed his audiences, choosing to sing for the working people. He never demanded a fee for such concerts. Together with London workers he founded a workers' theatre called "Unity Theatre".

Paul Robeson is a man loyal to his principles, just as his father had once taught him always to remain loyal to a conviction or principle he had found to be just and good. For him this was the conviction that socialism is the only social system worth fighting for, social order which guarantees all rights and liberties.

The American government, however, did not like his attitude. After Paul Robeson had publicly stated his views and thoughts, as for example at the World Peace Conference in Paris in 1949, the administration made repeated attempts to bribe him to support the official policy of the USA. But he was adamant. Not even the terror at his Peekskill concert in 1949 and the subsequent eight years of struggle for his passport could force him to his knees. During the 'fifties they tried to kill Robeson by silence; he was a prisoner in his own country. Later on, even stage, radio and television as well as recordings were barred to him. During this period he learned several languages and intensified his studies of music. International solidarity, however, eventually forced his government to return his passport.

In 1928 for the first time Robeson sang "Ol' Man River" in the musical "Showboat", the song which spread his fame throughout almost the whole world. In it he used the whole range of warmth and power in his voice. The original words of the song, however, were not to his liking for they included passages which were derogatory to the negroes or which depicted their situation in an unreal or sentimental fashion. Nor was there anything that would encourage them to rise against oppression and slavery and Robeson, as a result of his political development, had become aware that action is the most potent means of improving living conditions and achieving peace and freedom. Humility and trust in God had failed to offer any solution. These were the reasons why he changed some of the words of "Ol' Man River" in the 'thirties, replacing passages of resignation by calls to action. The original version, for example contained the following lines:

> "Get a little drunk and you land in jail.
> I'm tired of trying and I'm tired of living
> but I'm scared of dying"

Robeson altered this passage to read:

"Show a little courage and you land
in jail.
But I go on laughing instead of crying.
I must go on fighting until I die."

In this way he clearly indicated the road to be followed, completely deleting the original passages about longing for the holy river and divine help.

In his version he does not say that it is the black people alone who are oppressed but appeals rather to all exploited classes. Robeson had become conscious that black and white marching side by side can win their rights more quickly and that only in unity can they achieve victory in the class struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

SIGRID JAHN

Paul Robeson and his Struggle against Imperialism

In 1933, when Hitler came to power in Germany, Paul Robeson paid little attention. At that time many refugees were arriving in England, among them Frederick Kuh, a German reporter who had published the first account of the background to the Reichstag fire and who had had to flee from fascist Germany to avoid being jailed by the Secret Police. Paul Robeson had an opportunity of speaking with him and it was then that he became aware of the threat of fascism.

In 1934 he gave a concert in London to raise financial support for Jewish refugees. Paul Robeson saw that these people had to leave their homeland because of their race and he began to compare the plight of the Jews in Nazi Germany with that of his own people in the USA. He realized the parallel between the two - that the negroes in the USA as well as the German Jews were victims of racial hatred. Many years later Paul Robeson described the concert in aid of Jewish refugees as the starting point of his political awareness. From then on he devoted himself more vigorously to political work.

In December 1934 he had an opportunity of learning more about Nazi rule in Germany when on his journey to Moscow he stayed in Berlin for two days. Walking through the city, he sensed the depressed mood of many passers-by and the streets he walked were packed with stormtroopers who did not look at him with friendly eyes. On his departure, the railway station was filled by Hitler's stormtroopers who formed a wall between Paul Robeson and the other people. On this occasion Paul Robeson said to his wife: "This is like Mississippi. It's how a lynching begins. If either of us moves or shows fear they'll go further. We must keep our heads. I never understood what fascism was before. I'll fight it wherever I find it from now on."

In 1936, when the Spanish Civil War started, Paul Robeson stated that every artist and every scientist must make up his mind where he stands. Nobody could be allowed to remain inactive while it was possible everywhere to support a just cause. On December 20, 1937, he took part in a meeting at which arms, food and justice were demanded for democratic Spain. In January 1938 he travelled to Spain where he sang for the fighting men of the International Brigades. His heart swelled with pride on meeting the negroes in the Lincoln Brigade.

After his stay in Spain he undertook a concert tour through the Scandinavian countries during which his recitals in Oslo, Copenhagen and Stockholm became demonstrations against fascism. When the Second World War broke out on September 1, 1939, Paul Robeson returned to the United States where he joined the Committee for the Relief of Antifascist Refugees. After the fascist assault on the Soviet Union, Paul Robeson declared at a mass rally in New York: "I saw the Red Army and I know it will win."

Robeson was by then already a sincere friend of the USSR and he knew that the people of this country, in which members of every race were living together in peace and harmony, would use all their power and strength to repulse the fascist invaders and he also knew that fascism could not maintain its rule for ever. Wherever he came in contact with it, he dedicated himself to the unceasing battle to bring about its destruction.

SYDNEY GORDON

Robeson and Canada

I think that as a Canadian, it is fitting to say that the fact that a conference of this kind is taking place on the life and

work of Paul Robeson is, on the one hand, a tribute to Paul Robeson, the man and the artist. On the other hand, however, I think it should be said that it is a tribute to the GDR, to the spirit prevailing in the GDR, which makes it possible for men like Paul Robeson to be honoured here.

Robeson's activities in the United States and in Britain are, of course, now a part of history. Not so well known is the fact that Robeson also developed a very close, a very militant relationship to the people and especially to the working class of Canada. It is a curious coincidence that I personally was somehow selected by fate to be the contact man, the first contact man, I should say, between Robeson and the Canadian working class. It took place in 1942 in rather curious circumstances.

I was then a rather youngish editor of a labour publication called the "Canadian Tribune" in Toronto, and here came the announcement in the newspapers that this great and dazzling star, which he was to all of us then, Paul Robeson was to sing in Toronto for the first time after his return from England. He was to sing in the celebrated series known as the "Toronto-Eton Auditorium" series in which the world's leading artists sang on a Thursday and Saturday evening; thus giving two concerts. And I think it is rather unusual, a series of two concerts by one artist! Now, when we in the "Canadian Tribune" offices read that Paul Robeson was coming to town we looked at each other and we said, "Now, that's our man!"

Canada at the time had the honour of being one of the relatively few countries in the world, in which the Communist party was illegal. The "Canadian Tribune" is not a Communist publication, nevertheless, it was a labour publication with a Marxist viewpoint. As the question arose - how are we going to get an interview with Robeson? - I picked up the telephone and called the hotel where he was staying and was told Robeson was seeing nobody until after his concerts were over. So I took the last four issues of the "Canadian Tribune" and I said to the other members of the editorial board, "All we have to do with a man like Paul Robeson is to send him some copies of the 'Tribune' with a covering letter and we won't have to say any more. He will know exactly who we are." And so I went over to the hotel with an envelope with four copies of the "Canadian Tribune", left them there with a covering letter, saying - we would like to interview you, and that was all. Greetings from your friends!

The next day I received the telephone call from Paul Robeson personally saying, "Where is everybody?" I said, "Well, I am here. What do you mean?" And he said, "Come on over to the hotel. I've been reading the paper." I rushed over to the hotel, of course, I had never in my wildest dreams at that time thought that I would sit together with Paul Robeson in one hotel room. I came in, he greeted me, of course, with his great booming sincerity and he said, "Man, where is everybody?" He had had his first concert the night before and I said, well, as I understood it the place was sold out. I said I couldn't get any tickets myself until Saturday. He said, "That's not what I mean." He said, "The concert is over and I go back-stage and a mass of people around, but nobody but the wealthy, not a damned comrade around. How do you account for that?" "Well", I said, "the party is illegal here." And I went on to explain that, if it had been known that he would have welcomed comrades to greet him back-stage, there would have been one of the greatest demonstrations in Toronto history. But that out of consideration for him we hadn't shown our highly suspect faces. "However", I said, "if you want people to come back-stage whom you know as comrades", I said, "we will spread the word for Saturday night."

On Saturday night I was also present and was one of the members of a vast group of people who went back-stage grinning to reassure Robeson that the ideas for which he stood were not dead in Canada, despite the fact that they were at the time illegal. From that moment on, of course, Robeson established very close, very personal contacts both with the Marxist movement and with all progressive circles in Canada. His concerts became not only musical events, but his every visit to Canada also became a political event.

And thus it was that in 1944, when the Canadian army had been inactive throughout the war, and the federal government decided that something had to be done somehow to establish a certain contact between the people and the army, and somehow to feature

the army without putting it into action - you will remember the period of the "no second front" - the government proclaimed an Army News Week, an Armed Forces Week, in which the armed forces were to be honoured. And so, since the government itself had sponsored this Army Week we decided that we would do it up town in Toronto.

And so we got into touch with Robeson and we said, "How would you like to come? How would you like to sing to an audience of 17,000 people, honouring the Canadian armed forces? The proceeds will go to one of the welfare funds of the 'Toronto Daily Star' and also to the presentation of a mobile blood transfusion unit to the Red Cross Society." The unit was to be named in honour of Dr. Norman Bethune. I had no inkling at that time that I would ever have more contact with the memory of Bethune, or that I would even write a book about him. And so we put this up to Robeson and Robeson immediately responded. He would come willingly without any fee, but characteristically, five hundred Dollars would have to be paid into the special Africa fund that he then supported and which comrade Patterson knows about better than I.

And so it happened that in Canada, during the Army Week, the great central event was a vast concert in Maple Leaf Gardens with 17,000 people, with mass bands of all the different armed forces, and with Robeson as the guest star. That was in a way typical of Robeson's relationship to Canada.

I might point out, by the way, that Robeson was introduced by Mayor Convoy of Toronto, one of the most conservative of all conservatives, who had his office telephone me, asking if I couldn't send some materials to him on Robeson, so that he would know how to introduce him properly. And on the night of this greatest concert that I have ever been at, Mayor Convoy was introduced as the man who was going to introduce the guest star and here came this Tory with my notes. My first great ghost success as a writer! I had written notes which I had intended him to use as part of a speech, but for him the notes were the speech, which is perhaps also interesting, because he wound up by saying in my words, "Paul Robeson is not only an artist, not only a citizen of the United States, I introduce to you now Paul Robeson, the citizen of the world!"

After that great event Robeson's contacts to Canada proceeded along three lines: First of all, his concerts were always highly successful, always great events. And then, despite all the difficulties of his contracts with the agency monopolies, and they certainly are monopolies, he began a series of annual "Canadian Tribune" Concerts directly, where he sang in Massy Hall, always packed, 2 500 seats, with all the proceeds going to the "Canadian Tribune". And all kinds of men and women - in very elegant dress - coming to hear him and of course murmuring among themselves, "It is rather terrible that we must hear all this stuff about the 'Canadian Tribune' just because we want to hear Robeson."

And then came his direct contacts with the trade unions of Canada. This especially marked the period when he was put under ban, when the McCarthy inquisition ruled that Robeson was to speak and to sing nowhere. It was during this period that we had probably the most unique concerts in Canadian history. One took place when he was invited to a concert, to a labour concert in Toronto, and he was refused permission by the Canadian government and refused exit by the American government, both of which, of course, have known how to preach about the models of democracy that they represent. On this occasion Robeson was present via telephone! He actually sang to the people by long-distance telephone with the voice amplified in the receiving hall.

Even more dramatic, however, was the concert that took place during the National Convention of the mine, mill and smelter workers, a hard fighting union at the time, which was being attacked by the powerful nickel and gold mining interests. They invited Robeson to come to their Convention in Vancouver in British Columbia. The American authorities, of course, to which Robeson was such a menace, refused to let him out of the country.

What then happened was the following: The conference moved en masse to the border between Canada and the United States to an international park area through which the border runs and Robeson came from the other side and so the singer was in the United States and his audience was in Canada. He sang from the United States and the applause

came from Canada, a very rich illustration of what true internationalism is!

There is another question, however, on which I feel the urge to comment. It is the question of what we can learn in a very specific manner from the life and work of Paul Robeson, his constant striving for self-improvement as man and artist, his unreserved and automatic identification with his own people, the Afro-Americans, and with the working class, not as their patron, but as someone with the same heartbeat, the same aspirations, the same innermost feelings.

You all know that it has become a fashion lately for a broad variety of fools and scoundrels to set themselves up as instant socialist Messiahs. These are the sudden prophets who have materialized overnight and who expect everyone who desires a new world to follow them unquestioningly. I don't mean here to shift our discussions into a controversial direction. My remarks are meant, rather, to contrast the demonstrably forced claims of such prophets with the solid consistency and the direction of Robeson's life and work. Some of these hearty prophets like Marcuse in America, Ernst Fischer in Vienna, Bloch in West Germany - they tell us that the working class has become integrated with the existing order, that the working class is no longer capable of being a revolutionary element in class society.

This deserves comment at a symposium on the life and work of Paul Robeson - for the life and work of Paul Robeson are a clear refutation of the arrogant elite theories of the Marcuses and Fischers and all these others. In the splendour of Robeson's artistic creativity and his militant political activity, we can see how senseless, how foolish, how ridiculous are all these ideas, these theoretical idiocies, which seek to separate intellectuals, writers and artists from the natural comrades, from the mass of the people, the working class.

Robeson has never sat on a throne, he has never expected the exploited workers and his fellow Afro-Americans to kneel before him to receive his command. He most certainly has had plenty to teach others as an artist and as a man, but he has always taken it for granted that he is nothing without his oppressed people, without the working people of America and the world. For him it has been self-evident, automatic, that he has lots to learn from the working class and the organized workers' movement.

I remember an incident that impressed me greatly. On one of his visits to Canada, when the right wing in the USA was organizing a vast campaign against him, I asked him if he was bothered that the rich patrons of the arts were no longer so friendly? He laughed a great booming laugh and said, "Look man, the high and the mighty, they don't like what I say, but every American city I sing in, there they are, sitting in the loges." He laughed again and then said proudly, "I can go through the streets in this country, I can go through any miners' town and ways, and all along the way people will call out: 'Hallo there, Paul'." He said this not only with pride but with pleasure, for he is not one of the Marcuse crop of intellectuals who has lost hope in the people, who underrate the revolutionary potential of the people and overrate their own personal importance in isolation from the people, splendid isolation, a life of luxury remote from the people and the workers, a life spent in the great houses of the rich. That has always been unthinkable for Robeson. Of course, he was eagerly invited to the homes of the rich. But he was at home in the humble houses, in the ranks of the working class, in the miners' towns and villages, in the fighting ranks of Canada's hard rock miners and smelters, in the ranks of the peoples of Africa struggling for liberation.

And that, of course, has been reflected in his art. It is one of the reasons why we so respect and honour him. He teaches us that true greatness can be attained only by those whose power and inspiration come from the people. He teaches us that in alliance with the people the artist and intellectual can become giants who can overcome all difficulties. He teaches us that the cause of the people is the cause of the artist and that we will share the final victory everywhere together.

ALEX LA GUMA
Paul Robeson and Africa

Allow me to express my sincere thanks to you and the organisers of this symposium on Paul Robeson and on the struggle of the

Afro-American people, for the invitation to be present here. We can well understand the sentiments which stimulated this gathering. The cause of Afro-Asian solidarity, solidarity with the Afro-American people, and in fact with all oppressed and persecuted people thoughout the world, is characteristic of the German Democratic Republic. Since its inception, the GDR has done many things which have vindicated the honour of progressive Germany. Your people have risen like the phoenix from the ashes of Nazism; and you have shown time and again that the spirit of Thälmann, Beimler, the Spartacists, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels did not die as a result of the Hitlerite depredations. The present demonstration of your solidarity with the Afro-American people whose suffering and heroism is today epitomised by Angela Davis, is certainly close to the hearts of the African people as well.

The forefathers of the Afro-American people were brought from my continent during the seventeenth century. The black people of the USA are there today because their ancestors were brought there against their will, chained and bound in the dark holds of slave ships. From free man to second-class citizen, the struggle of our peoples have always been towards the same objective: complete freedom. The newly-captured Africans who leaped from the slave ships to their deaths; the young Afro-Americans facing the night of white supremacy on the streets of the United States; the heroism of Angela Davis, are all common factors in the long and bloody history of the black man's constant efforts to free himself from the yoke of slavery.

The struggle of the Afro-American parallels in many ways the struggles of colonial peoples all over the world to rid themselves of exploiters and slave-masters. Dr. Martin Luther King was murdered in Tennessee for the same reasons Patrice Lumumba was murdered in the Congo: and by the same forces. The African black man and the American black man are fighting the common enemy, international imperialism, whether in the form of Portuguese and South African racist troops in Southern Africa or the police forces of the United States. In Vietnam and Indo-China the same struggle goes on against the same enemy for the same reasons.

While we wage our present-day struggle, we must recall at some time or other the struggles of the past as well. We Africans who today confront the forces of fascism and racist oppression call all the time on the international progressive community for unity and support for our cause. The international alliance of solidarity with oppressed Africa has a history in which the contribution of progressive America has a place. Not only is Paul Robeson close to us because of his ancestral origins, but because he stands great in the long struggle of the American people, both black and white, for justice both in his homeland and outside it.

Although of African descent, Paul Robeson did not come in contact with the cause of African freedom until the end of the 1920's. It was in 1928 that he placed the song "Ol' Man River" on the musical map of the world. He had come to London then to appear in "Show Boat". It is perhaps typical of a man from an oppressed community to feel more at home among others in the same plight, rather than in the company of the celebrities who feted him in London. So Paul Robeson felt much easier in the company of British dock workers and Welsh miners and the many Africans whom he met. Many of the Africans in London then were students and political workers, and from these Paul Robeson found a revival of Africa within him. Among the Africans he met in London then were several who were to become noteworthy afterwards--men like Jomo Kenyatta, Nkrumah and others.

It might be of interest to take a quick glance at what was happening in Africa at that time. It was a period when more and more efforts were being made by the colonialists to extract the maximum of wealth from Africa in order to bolster up their tottering economy. Law upon law, regulation upon regulation were introduced in the regions of East and West Africa to ensure the maximum cheap labour and the highest production of raw materials and other wealth.

In Tanganyika for example, an unwarranted departure from work was considered a criminal offence; in Uganda regulations enforced every adult African to work for 30 days a year without wages on road construction. Peasants were allowed to sell their crops only within a fixed time in restricted zones and for set prices. The

policies of the imperialists transformed the countries of Africa into hell for the Africans and paradise for all foreign exploiters.

Increased exploitation coincided with social and political awareness among Africans and they were inevitably drawn into the anti-imperialist movement. In 1920 the Kikuyu of Kenya set up their first organisation; in Tanganyika the establishment of mass peasants' and workers' organisations was a sign of the growing awareness of the working people; in Dahomey in West Africa railway workers launched a significant strike, the first of its kind, likewise, workers took action in Senegal, Guinea, and on the Ivory Coast. These were the first efforts of the modern working class and political movements in Africa.

The Kikuyu Central Association sent their secretary-general, Jomo Kenyatta, to Britain where he carried on intensive work on behalf of the African population of Kenya. It is under these circumstances that Paul Robeson had the opportunity of coming in contact with the African situation. Through these contacts, through the inevitable discussions, Robeson became aware of the continent of his ancestors who had been taken from it in chains.

In what was then the Union of South Africa, a rapid consciousness of the importance of the national liberation struggle of the African people there was also developing at that time. Together with the demands of the oppressed black people for emancipation, a class-consciousness was also taking deep root. African workers saw themselves not only oppressed as black people, but also exploited as workers. Inevitably the ideas of socialism caught the interest of more and more Africans.

It is not coincidental that the visit to the USSR by Paul Robeson in 1934 had the same effect on him as it had on the South African leader Gumede. Paul Robeson on visiting the USSR said that he had seen whole nations of so-called "primitive peoples" now building highly-developed socialist republics, working and building countless new factories, schools, universities, all within twenty years. To him this proved the falsity of the colonialist claim that black people would not be able to rule themselves for thousands of years.

Gumede, a leader of the African National Congress, told a mass meeting of Africans when he returned from the USSR, "I have seen the new world to come, where it has already begun. I have been to the new Jerusalem." He claimed that he had brought the key which would unlock the door to freedom.

Paul Robeson the singer since those days placed his voice and his talent at the service of the struggle for emancipation of the black oppressed, and at the service of all progressive mankind. He was an artist who did not see art in isolation from the problems which beset society, the whole world, the whole of humanity. Becoming more and more aware of the problems of the Afro-American and African people, he was endowed with the wisdom to see the link between black oppression and the rest of the world's problems. It was therefore inevitable that he was drawn into the world-wide anti-fascist struggle of the thirties and subsequent years.

Caught in the whirlpool of the fight to destroy fascism, a fight that was both dramatic and horrible, it was at this time that he saw clearly that he as an artist, a singer, a man of talent, could not possibly stand aloof from the future of humanity. He saw that the artist who was honest could never remain in an ivory tower while mankind was engaged in one of the titanic struggles of its history.

I think that his outlook as an artist is significantly illustrated by a speech made in the Albert Hall London at a rally in support of the Spanish republic and reported in the South African anti-imperialist magazine "The Liberator" in 1937. Paul Robeson said then, "Every artist, every scientist, must decide now where he stands. He has no alternative. There is no standing above the conflict on Olympian heights.... The battlefield is everywhere, there is no sheltered rear...Fascism fights to destroy the culture which society has created; created through pain and suffering, through desparate toil, but with unconquerable will and lofty vision... What matters a man's profession or vocation? Fascism is no respecter of persons. It makes no distinction between combatants and non-combatants... The artist must take sides; he must elect to fight for freedom or for slavery. I have made my choice. I have no alternative. The history of the capitalist era is characterised by the degredation of my people; despoiled of their lands, their women ravished, their culture destroyed.... I say

the true artist cannot hold himself aloof. The legacy of culture from our predecessors is in danger. It is the foundation upon which we build a still more lofty edifice. It belongs not only to us, not only to the present generation - it belongs to posterity and must be defended to the death." These words of Paul Robeson hold good today as they did then.

It was in 1937 that he also helped to found the Council for African Affairs of which he became chairman. This American organisation had two main aims: to support the cause of African freedom, collecting funds for various African causes, and also to tell Americans the truth about affairs and events in Africa. Under the first of the Council's objectives, the people of South Africa remember the assistance provided during a severe famine in the eastern part of our country shortly after the Second World War. However, the other aims of the Council provided the opportunity for many Americans to learn the truth about our country. Until then, I believe, most Americans thought in terms of Edgar Rice Burroughs' stories of Tarzan and the Apes, whenever they heard the continent of Africa mentioned.

The South African people also remember with appreciation and affection Paul Robeson's first task when he was released from the USA after the McCarthy persecutions. In 1958, just arrived in Europe from the United States, he sang in a special service at St. Paul's Cathedral London in aid of the fund for the defence of South African political prisoners.

As a South African I believe I can say with truth that Paul Robeson had a special spot within himself for my country. We recall that, in 1950, when workers were shot down by the fascist police at a May Day demonstration, Paul Robeson addressed a meeting of the National Labour Conference for Negro Rights, telling his audience: "Twelve South African workers now lie dead, shot in a peaceful demonstration by Malan's fascist police; as silent testimony to the fact that...it is later than they think in the procession of history, and that rich land must one day return to Africans on whose backs the proud skyscrapers of the Johannesburg rich were built."

Today the South African people stand on the threshold of the final struggle for the liberation of the black majority and the other oppressed communities. In 1961, the armed struggle for the overthrow of fascism in South Africa was begun; for the overthrow of white supremacy, of injustice, of racial hatred and the exploitation of our hard-pressed people. In 1967, the first battalions of our partisan fighters met the racist troops of South Africa and Rhodesia. Our people have died there in the beautiful Zambesi valley, since they have said that they no longer wish to lay down their lives defencelessly. I do not think that the South African movement today claims wholesale success or that victory will come soon. But we have reached the turning point in our history, and we have no doubt that victory will be ours.

Very recently Nixon, President of the USA, claimed that he and his government are against apartheid and racism in South Africa. This is a lie. In the first place, the ruling class of the USA cannot be against racism in South Africa and at the same time condone and encourage it in the United States. Secondly, the United States of America is the second biggest foreign investor in South Africa and millions of dollars in profits are being sucked from the marrow and blood of African exploitation in South Africa.

We South African know full well who are our friends and allies in the United States. They are people like Paul Robeson who has raised his voice in song and worked in the interest of solidarity with the South African people. They are people like the late Martin Luther King, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Angela Davis and all the Afro-Americans and genuine democrats fighting for the cause of justice, freedom and humanity in their country.

LLOYD L. BROWN
Champion of National Liberation and Internationalism

In describing the hero of one of his plays, Shakespeare noted that "the elements so mix'd in him that Nature might stand up and say to all the world: This was a man!"

That poetic description truly fits a real-life hero of our time: Paul Robeson is indeed such an integrated man.

I propose here briefly to discuss Paul Robeson in relation to the struggle for national liberation and the struggle for

internationalism--those two great issues that became fused into a oneness in his life. Just as the artist and the citizen are indivisible in Robeson's character, his concern for his own people is inseparable from his concern for all other peoples.

Robeson's devotion to national liberation was, like his art, rooted deep in the traditions of his own people, the oppressed masses of black Americans. The son of a Negro who had escaped from plantation slavery, Paul knew at the outset of his life that for his people America was not at all the "land of the free" that is so proudly hailed in its national anthem.

The decade into which Paul was born--the 1890's--saw two American developments that would profoundly influence his adult life as a fighter for liberation at home and abroad. One development was the legalized establishment of a system of second-class citizenship for the Negro people, who had been freed from chattel slavery 30 years earlier. This happened in 1896, two years before Paul was born, when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld as constitutional all laws that compelled racial segregation in American life. In making that decision, the Court made clear its racist thinking when it said: "Legislation is powerless to eradicate racial instincts or to abolish distinctions based upon physical difference . . . If one race is inferior to another socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them on the same plane."

The other development was the emergence of the United States as an imperialist power. Paul was born on April 9, 1898; and the birthday of U.S. imperialism might well be given as April 25 of that year, when Congress declared war against the moribund Spanish Empire. As a result of that war the U.S. grabbed its first overseas colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippine Islands and other islands in the Pacific) and engaged in armed conflict for the first time against a colonial liberation movement--the so-called "Filipino Insurrection," which the U.S. Army ruthlessly suppressed.

A Negro spokesman of that time, Charles G. Baylor, wrote that the U.S. invasion of Cuba was not to liberate the Cubans but to put down their revolution which had begun, he said, "as an Afro-Cuban Socialist uprising against Spanish tyranny, capitalistic greed and rapacity." He added the profound statement, which would later often be quoted by Paul Robeson: "The American Negro cannot become the ally of imperialism without enslaving his own race."

As is happened, Robeson's first participation in the struggle against "white supremacy" was not political but cultural. At the outset of his career as a singer, he directly challenged the prevailing racist notion that Negro music was inferior; that Negro song could not be considered as art. He set out to prove that the folk music of his people was fully equal to that of any other people, and his first concert, held in New York on April 19, 1925, was a triumph both for himself as a singer and for his people's songs. For the first time in American history a concert singer had presented a program consisting entirely of Negro compositions, and the critics and audience alike hailed the singer and his songs as truly great.

Throughout the first five years of his concert career Robeson continued that cultural struggle, singing only the songs of his oppressed people to enraptured audiences all over the United States and Europe. As he put it simply in later years, when he discussed that period of his life with me, "What had to be proved, was proved." (I made a mental note that he did not use the word "I" in telling me that. Modesty is fused with his greatness.)

However, as an actor there was little opportunity for him to appear in serious roles on the American stage or screen, and so Robeson settled in England, where he became a top star as a concert singer, recording artist, and a leading actor in the theater and on film. There in London, center of the British Empire, he came to see that his people, who yearned to be free and equal, were not only the Negroes of the United States. His people were also the peoples of Africa and the West Indies; and the peoples of China and India and Indonesia--indeed the vast majority of human beings, who were deemed by their colonial masters to be racially inferior.

Through his study of African history, culture and languages, and through his association with anti-imperialists from both the colonies and the controlling country, Robeson became an active supporter of

the colonial liberation movements. Largely through his efforts the Council on African Affairs was established in the United States in 1937; and until the organization was outlawed in 1955, Robeson served as its chairman. Associated with him in the leadership of the Council were two other eminent black American scholars and freedom-fighters, W.E.B. Du Bois and Alphaeus Hunton.

Dr. Hunton, who died last year in Zambia where he was continuing his work for African advancement, wrote this of Paul Robeson: "His unswerving devotion to the cause of African freedom, his world-encompassing vision, and his powerful voice and big human spirit were of inestimable importance in forwarding the Council's effort to rally Americans, black and white, in support of Africa's liberation from imperialist bondage."

Paul also came to feel a sense of close kinship with the common people everywhere, regardless of race or nationality. In his book, published in your country under the title, "Mein Lied--meine Waffe" he told how he had learned that the true character of a nation is determined not by its ruling class but by the common people, and that the common people of all nations are truly brothers in the human family. "If in Britain", he wrote, "there were those who lived by plundering the colonial peoples, there were also the many millions who earned their bread by honest toil. And even as I grew more Negro in spirit, or African as I put it then, I also came to feel a sense of oneness with the white working people whom I came to know and love."

Together with the most progressive people of all lands, Paul became a militant anti-fascist in the 1930's and went to Spain to sing for the International Brigades. The spirit of unconquerable resistance that marked that period will always live in his recordings of such songs as "The Peatbog Soldiers", "The Four Insurgent Generals", and others.

When he returned to his homeland in 1939, Paul's stature as artist and fighter reached new heights and he became for many Americans, black and white, a symbol of the struggle against fascism abroad and reaction at home. He took a leading part in the militant movement to abolish lynching and win equal rights for black Americans. He also was prominently associated with the great struggles of the workers to form unions and win better conditions in the steel, auto, and other basic industries. He won the highest award given by the Negro civil rights movement, and he was made an honorary lifetime member of several large trade unions.

Then too, in the more progressive atmosphere of those days, Paul scored his greatest triumph as an actor in the play, "Othello", which had the longest continuous run of any Shakespearean production in our country. It was more than a personal success, and if today black actors are sometimes given leading role on the American stage and in films, it can be said that Robeson's artistic powers did much to open the way.

In the postwar period, Robeson's internationalism brought him into the leadership of the worldwide movement for peace that rose to meet the threat of atomic war. It can be said that the present, more widespread movement for peace in America today had its roots in that earlier ban-the-bomb campaign in which Paul played so prominent a part.

As a singer, Robeson based his internationalism on the folk songs of other peoples, just as he had earlier expressed his ethnic consciousness through Negro folk songs. He studied many languages and added the songs of many lands to his repertoire. The concept of the oneness of mankind, of which Paul often spoke, was for him not an abstract theory but a reality that he could and did demonstrate to audiences everywhere. His beautiful voice was, of course, a gift of Nature; but his use of it and the songs he sang were a part of his conscious struggle for freedom and brotherhood.

Paul's humanism was by no means merely a matter of the heart. As a practical humanist he supported the worldwide movement toward socialism. "On many occasion," he wrote, "I have publicly expressed my belief in the principles of scientific socialism, my deep conviction that for all mankind a socialist society represents an advance to a higher stage of life--that it is a form of society which is economically, socially, culturally, and ethically superior to a system based upon production for private profit."

As you here in the German Democratic Re-

public know from first-hand experience, Paul felt at home in the socialist world. When he returned to our country he told us all about the wonderful reception you gave him in 1960 and of the devoted care he received when he came to your country later for medical treatment.

You also know - indeed, the whole world knows - of Paul's close friendship with the peoples of the Soviet Union, a friendship that goes back nearly forty years, when he first visited what was then the only socialist country in the world. When the cold war was at its fiercest, Paul's warm regard for the Soviet Union and all the other socialist countries never wavered under the intense pressure and persecution to which he was subjected. Surely one of the noblest demonstrations of true internationalism was the stand that Robeson took in that time of McCarthyite terror as he, a persecuted black American, emerged in the U.S. as the most outspoken advocate of peace and friendship with the socialist countries.

In November, 1949, he boldly challenged the reactionaries who had incited mob violence against him earlier that year in Peekskill. "To those who dare question my patriotism", he said, "who have the unmitigated insolence to question my love for the true America and my right to be an American - to question me, whose father and forefathers fertilized the very soil of this country with their toil and with their bodies - to such people I answer that those and only those who work for a policy of friendship with the Soviet Union are genuine American patriots. And all others who move toward a war that would destroy civilization, whether consciously or unconsciously, are betraying the best interests of this country and the American people."

Today in our country a majority of the population has come to see that the U.S. intervention in Vietnam is a terrible wrong, and that the war must be ended. But Paul, the consistent national liberationist and internationalist, warned against that involvement more than twenty years ago, when it was a French army that was waging the war against the freedom-seeking Vietnamese people. In June, 1950, he said in a speech in Chicago: "Today we have the announcement of another program of arms shipments to destroy a movement for colonial independence - this time arms for the French imperialists to use against the brave Vietnamese patriots in what the French progressive masses call the 'dirty war' in Indochina."

"These actions of the U.S. government", he continued, "cry out to the world that our nation, born in a bloody battle for freedom against imperialist tyranny, has itself become the first enemy of freedom and the chief tyrant of the mid-century world. They warn more than half the world's population who people the vast continents of Asia and Africa that, until the course of our foreign policy is changed, they can no longer look to the U.S. government for help in their strenuous struggles for a new and independent life." Just imagine how much loss of life, how much devastation would have been averted had his countrymen heeded Robeson then, at the very first sign of U.S. intervention in Vietnam!

Paul was also a forerunner of the present upsurge of black militancy in the U.S. In a recent speech, the prominent Afro-American political leader, Richard G. Hatcher, who is the Mayor of Gary, Indiana, pointed to that fact which has been covered up by the news media and by various black opportunists who seek to divert the black people's movement away from its historic goals. Mayor Hatcher said: "In 1949 when Robeson said in Paris, 'Hell no, we won't go,' he was saying what black young men are chanting today in Harlem and Watts and on college campuses up and down the land." Mayor Hatcher also told his audience that Robeson "was a decade ahead of his time" in the militant ideas expressed in his book. "Here I Stand", that was published in 1958.

Unfortunately--and not at all accidentally--that book has been out of print in our country for many years. However, I was pleased to bring the good news to Paul, when I visited him just before I came here, that arrangements have been made for his book to be reprinted this Fall. Though he is not able to be active in person, Paul's message to his people will once again be heard.

I shall conclude my remarks in the internationalist spirit of Robeson. I recall how he ended a concert he sang for 40,000 Canadians at the U.S.-Canadian border (which included songs in French, Russian, Chinese, German, Spanish, Yiddish, as well as English--he closed by reciting a few lines

of poetry by Pablo Neruda of Chile. Well, I began with some words from a great English writer, which seemed to fit my subject, and now I shall quote a great Russian writer whose words seem equally appropriate.

"There will come a time, I know," wrote Maxim Gorky, "when people will take delight in one another, when each will be a star to the other, and when each will listen to his fellow as to music." It seems to me that in Paul Robeson we have met a man of that bright future, a living portent of mankind's potential, a forerunner of the Age of Brotherhood toward which we aspire.

IGOR GEYEVSKI

Robeson and the Struggle of the Afro-Americans for Liberation

I am attending this Symposium as a representative of the Soviet Comittee for the Defence of Peace and the Institute for the Study of the United States of America attached to the USSR Academy of Sciences, which is only three years old and the youngest academic institute of the Soviet Union. Both institutions have asked me to convey cordial greetings to the organizers of this Symposium, the Academy of Arts, the World Peace Council and the other organizations represented. I should like to add my personal thanks, to Professor Frank Loeser, Brigitte Boegelsack and the other comrades for the opportunity to take part in the Symposium.

I have the impression that the German comrades can be proud of their efforts to organize this Symposium for it has been really worthwhile. One can indeed say that the Symposium is taking a most interesting course. It has become a constructive, fruitful and genuine international meeting.

At the 24th Party Congress of the CPSU Secretary General Comrade Brezhnev referred to the struggle being waged by the Afro-Americans which we in the Soviet Union are watching with great sympathy. The movement for the liberation of Angela Davis has literally assumed a popular character. It is also a fact that every family knows Paul Robeson's name and songs and calls him lovingly Pavel Vassilich. He is known and respected as a expressive protest singer of the Afro-Americans and appreciated for his determination to achieve their liberation from enslavement. He is known and acclaimed as a courageous fighter against imperialism and we also appreciate, honour and love him as a great artist. In our country he is loved and valued as a great friend of the Soviet Union.

Some time ago I travelled across the USA and my strongest impression was of a rally in Chicago. Imagine a huge hall filled with 6,000 people, most of them black, youngsters and old people as well as children. On to the stage came a very handsome, young, well-built negro, the popular organizer James Jackson. On either side of him were four men, dressed in leather jackets with their hands in their pockets and one could sense that these hands were not empty. They watched the hall, obviously prepared to act against any unwelcome provocateur. After all, one must protect one's leader. Then Jackson started speaking. He said, "Although we may be poor, we are somebody!" and the whole audience repeated with one voice, "We are somebody!" "Although we may be hungry, we are somebody! Although they may persecute us, jail us, send police against us, we are somebody!" And 6,000 voices repeated, "We are somebody!" It was a most moving scene. When I was in that hall I sensed quite clearly the great progress that has taken place in the minds of the Afro-Americans. I not only sensed their suffering but also their consciousness of their own potential, their determination to struggle and their feeling of pride. Nowadays the national consciousness of the Afro-Americans is greater than ever before as is their sense of pride in their people, their race and the African peoples. This also finds expression in slogans such as "Black Power". Today the black Americans are no longer anxious to look like whites, they no longer try to straighten their hair or whiten their skins. There was a typical anecdote which went: A negro went to a hospital to have the colour of his skin changed to white. When he was told the price of the operation he got such a shock that his skin turned white and he saved himself the cost of the operation! Fifty years ago many a negro might have been proud of a white skin but nowadays the popular slogan among the negroes is: "Black is beautiful!" This feeling of pride in their own people

has, in some cases, assumed some rather inappropriate forms, but in principle it is a healthy feeling which has specific roots.

Looking into the past, the 'thirties and 'forties, the correctness of James Baldwin's statement is clear: "Two men achieved a great deal during those years, the world boxing champion Joe Louis and Paul Robeson." For three centuries a negro had no right to defend his sister, his beloved wife, even himself. But when Joe Louis won his fight, defeating a white boxer in a world championship, it was a great accomplishment for the black people in the USA. By raising his gloved hand in the ring he also raised the spirit of the black people and their belief in their own power.

Of even greater significance were the successes and victories achieved by Paul Robeson on the cultural front. He has world significance and international recognition, and through him millions of negro boys and girls - those who nowadays constitute the nucleus of the liberation movement - have become aware that they can trust their own abilities and strength and that they are capable of climbing to the summit in every field of human culture.
Unfortunately, precious little is being published on this in the United States. Generally it is true to say that the press and literature in the USA, excluding of course the Communist and progressive press and literature, but including the basic trends in literature, is extremely unjust towards Robeson in relation to his role in liberating the black people. Whenever you read a book on the history of the movement to liberate the negroes, you read that it was Martin Luther King who linked the negro liberation movement with the anti-war drive. Although I in no way wish to belittle the tremendous merits of Martin Luther King, one must give credit to the objective historical fact that Robeson was the first of the great negro organizers to raise the banner of opposition to imperialist wars. It was he who combined the negro struggle and the anti-war movement.

Or let us examine another issue, that of the struggle waged by black Americans in the international arena. Many authors in the USA claim that this was achieved by Malcolm X, a popular negro leader who was murdered in 1965, and that Malcolm X was the first international ambassador of the Afro-Americans. Malcolm X did, indeed visit more than twenty countries in Africa, the Far East and Europe. Again I do not want to belittle the merits of such a sincere fighter and a man who, despite his mistakes, unmasked US imperialism. However, historical facts show that long before Malcolm X Robeson's voice, the voice of a singer and fighter, was heard in many countries throughout the world. In 1964, Malcolm X tried to bring the issue of the oppression of the American negroes before the conscience of the United States. He failed. But twelve years earlier Comrade Patterson and Paul Robeson had fulfilled an historical role by voicing the accusation of genocide and by charging the United Nations to concern itself with the racial problem and by doing so they made a deep impact on world public opinion.

A few of the young negro leaders in the USA today criticize the civil rights movement, claiming that such rights in themselves do not yet guarantee equality. While this is certainly true the struggle to secure civil rights is, however a necessary stage in the struggle for the liberation of the black people. These young organizers are not the first to have pointed out that the demands of the civil rights movement are too limited. The struggle for civil rights had already reached a first climax in the Montgomery boycott. There the black people were unable to force the government to grant them civil rights. Robeson wrote at that time: "Granting of our civil liberties, the same as those of other Americans, does not guarantee complete genuine equality. To win these liberties is not a maximum but only a minimum necessity." This is historically correct and I could mention many more instances.

Our common duty as Robeson's friends is to do everything possible to make the facts about his real merits and the role he has played known to the world. In this context, I feel we should all send our best wishes for his great creative success. Lloyd Brown has taken on the most difficult task, one which might exceed the potential of a whole institute, the task of writing a comprehensive biography of Paul Robeson. We wish him every success in his work.

As Comrades Patterson and Brown and many others have pointed out, Paul Robeson has always been a great internationalist. It

is not a coincidence that this meeting, dedicated to Paul Robeson, is taking place in the capital of the German Democratic Republic where the people, led by the Socialist Unity Party, are following glorious international traditions, the traditions of the German working class, the traditions formulated by our teachers Marx and Engels. History shows that those who choose, to embrace the evil ideologies of racism and chauvinism are doomed to failure. But our ideals, the ideals of the working people of the GDR, the Soviet Union and millions of working people all over the world, the ideals of the best people in the USA, are the ideals of internationalism and freedom for all people. They have always been and will continue to be the ideals of socialist progress and of victory.

ERWIN WIRSING
Birthday Greetings

I am employed as a milling machine operator at the Treptow Electrical Appliances Works. Three years ago, when the formation of work teams was being discussed, we decided to give our team which is made up of 15 workers from the mechanical section of the factory the honorary title of "Paul Robeson".

We all agreed that the adoption of the name "Paul Robeson" would mean that we would have to meet serious obligations. We all know our work well because we have been doing it for years. Paul Robeson was already known to us as a singer and fighter for peace and a few of us had been lucky enough to meet him when he visited our factory. So we decided to begin an intensive study of Paul Robeson's life and work. We organized discussion groups on Paul Robeson's life and activities as a fighter for peace and, with the generous help of the Paul Robeson Archive of the German Academy of Arts, we arranged record evenings and so became more familiar with Paul Robeson as a singer.

All this was quite an effort for we always had a strenuous day's work in the factory behind us but we all really concentrated and there were many lively discussions after such record evenings. In this way we learnt much more about Paul Robeson and can now pass our knowledge on to our fellow workers.

In our work we had quite a few tussles among ourselves in the course of building up a really good team and it was by no means plain sailing. But our "Paul Robeson" team won the socialist competition held in honour of the 20th anniversary of the GDR in our section and after 18 months we were awarded the official title of "Team of Socialist Labour".
Whenever there are problems in production, members of our team take the lead in solving them. I can say without exaggeration and with pride that we have developed really good teamwork. The better personal contact we have established with one another become apparent when, for example, one of the team needs our help at home or when we take our wives to the theatre. We also take part in the factory sports events even though some of us have become a bit older and bit fatter as you can see if you look at me.

And what do we do in our leisure time? Well, for the third year running we shall be spending the Whitsun holiday with our families in the factory's holiday home. This is a wonderful prospect now we have just become like a big family with everybody supporting and helping his mates. And everything started with Paul Robeson, mind you! He has been fighting all his life for unity in the working class, for equal rights for everybody, for peace and socialism, and that is how we are living in the GDR today. Although Paul Robeson is thousands of miles away from us, throughout everything he has remained our close and dependable comrade-in-arms.

Only a few days ago our great friend celebrated his 73rd birthday and I should like to take this opportunity to convey to him from myself and all my team mates our most cordial birthday greetings and best wishes.

NORBERT KRAJA
Paul Robeson and the World Peace Movement

Paul Robeson's 73rd birthday provides us with an opportunity to pay homage and tribute to a man whose life and artistry have evoked world-wide respect, sympathy, love and support among the forces of peace, but hatred and fear in the camp of reaction. He who during his entire life has always fought for peace, freedom and the happiness of man, has become a symbol of the inter-

national peace movement and an inspiration to the people who are still compelled to fight for their right to self-determination and to those who are courageously and consistently opposing the neo-colonialism of the imperialist powers. Paul Robeson's heroic struggle also inspires his Afro-American countrymen who today - more than 100 years after their liberation from slavery - are forced to wage a bitter struggle for equality in the United States of America.

Paul Robeson's activities over decades in the cause of peace and equal rights for all peoples are still of great significance. They are embodied in the high aims of the World Peace Council of which Paul Robeson is a member of longing standing and which he has inspired and enriched by the example of his creativily, his art, his drive and his courage. Paul Robeson, whose struggle for the happiness of man in a peaceful world is being continued today in so many ways and on so broad a basis, has demonstrated to us that an individual must not shrink from personal involvement and great sacrifice if his work is to succeed.

This impressive and great man also merits our unreserved respect and love because he was one of the first to oppose the brutality and anti-humanism of fascism, using his art as an integral part of this struggle. German fascism, which for more than a decade had shackled and oppressed the German nation and in a devastating war had ravaged and caused untold suffering to people and States, particularly the USSR, was crushed in 1945 and Paul Robeson, in common with many people throughout the world, attached great importance to the construction of an anti-fascist Germany dedicated to peace.

We know that this great opportunity was frustrated by the imperialist powers and that a path of peace, international friendship, anti-fascism and anti-imperialism has been consistently followed in only one part of the defunct German Reich - in the GDR. The policy of the socialist German Democratic Republic, emphasizing as it does paece and d'entente, was of course assured of the respect and support of Paul and Eslanda Robeson who have always dedicated themselves to the work of building and protecting socialism.

We are indeed very proud that the names of Paul and Eslanda Robeson are so closely linked with the Peace Council of the German Democratic Republic. In 1960 at the Berlin Festival Paul Robeson won everybody's heart with his great art and received, as our most honoured guest, the "Star of International Friendship" from the hands of the Chairman of the GDR State Council, Walter Ulbricht. The Peace Council of the German Democratic Republic had the great honour of acting as his host and many of us were privileged to meet the great man in person. At that time the Peace Council sponsored the Robeson brochure of which many hundred copies were sent to peace fighters in the USA and other continents.

In 1963 Paul and Eslanda Robeson once again spent a holiday of several months in the German Democratic Republic as guests of our Peace Council. This pair, who were always generous towards and worked for our progressive cause, were friends and admirers of the great socialist Soviet Union and the other socialist countries. It is therefore no coincidence that Paul Robeson, whose health was greatly impaired by imperialist tyranny and persecution, sought treatment in the USSR and the GDR, for he could find the security and shelter he urgently needed only in the socialist countries. The Peace Council, which received for this purpose the support of the Government of the German Democratic Republic, tried its very best to extend to the Robesons - Eslanda, too, had been afflicted with a serious, subsequently fatal disease - all possible love and care.

Eslanda particularly insisted, despite her dangerous illness, on taking an active part in the political life of the GDR, speaking to the delegates at the Democratic Women's Federation of Germany on the struggle waged by Paul and herself and even attending the Documentary and Short Film Week in Leipzig as a representative of democratic America. During this time she was awarded the Peace Medal of the Peace Council of the German Democratic Republik which Paul Robeson and William Du Bois had already received in 1960. In 1965 we received, with great sorrow and sympathy for Paul, the news of the death of Eslanda Robeson, Paul's wonderful wife and a courageous and uncompromising fighter for peace and liberty in her own right. She was a model of what makes women great personalities; she

had political foresight, determination, stamina, patience and warm-hearted affection. With her death the GDR Peace Council lost a great friend and comrade.

We are greatly impressed by the fact that today in the United States of America the generation whose great teachers were Du Bois and Paul Robeson has taken up the challenge and is steadfastly carrying on the fight against the overt aggression of the imperialist government of the USA in Indochina and its support for the imperialist regime in the Middle East. It is with great joy that we greet you as representatives of the broad American peace movement whose powerful blows of April and May will receive the undivided attention and solidarity of all peace fighters. We are fully aware that the struggle waged by those forces dedicated to democratic and peace in the most dangerous imperialist state in the world, the USA, demands total commitment and immense courage. This awareness is reinforced when we repeatedly hear or read how the class dominated administration of the USA endeavours to intimidate, split and destroy the progressive movement with terror, persecution and even murder.

When today we speak of US imperialism, everybody immediately thinks of our beloved Angela Davis, of Bobby Seale and the numerous other representatives of a peace-loving, democratic America. We can assure them that, particularly in this International Year against Racism and Racial Discrimination, the GDR Peace Council, in the name of Paul and Eslanda Robeson and in alliance with the peace committees of the socialist countries and with all peace and liberation organisations, will carry on the struggle for the release of Angela Davis and all other political prisoners until we achieve our aims. Our solidarity and love go to those Americans who are dedicated to ending the crimes of the Nixon Administration in Indochina and against their own people, and we are convinced that they will emerge victorious.

The struggle for peace, equality and liberty is being waged on many fronts. Your anti-imperialist activities in the United States constitute for us encouragement and active support, and in the same way our constant efforts to achieve and safeguard European security in the face of the ominous manoeuvres of the principal adversaries of d' entente in Europe - the USA and the reactionary circles in the Federal Republic of Germany - contribute immediate support and assistance to your movement. We are delighted that this close reciprocal link is being increasingly understood in the United States, a fact which is strikingly illustrated by the growing movement there for the recognition of the German Democratic Republic. Our present solidarity and our common struggle will give us the strength to achieve final victory over the enemies of peace and to establish a truly peaceful world.

EBERHARD BRÜNING

The Black Liberation Movement and American Drama

The history of American drama and theatre shows that the Afro-American as a stage figure has been familiar to the public since the beginnings of American national literature and culture. As an evident social reality, he also had to appear in literature. However, up to about 1930, in the professional American theatre, he remained nothing more than a stereotyped figure on the perimeter of the action. He was stamped as the "stage Negro" and in his function resembled the "stage Jew" and the "stage Irishman". In accordance with the interest of the ruling class and its culture, he had been degraded to represent either the primitive and comical "simple Simon" or the religious and sentimental "Uncle Tom". It has been persistently suggested to the almost exclusively white audiences of the Broadway theatres, which even today in their highly commercialized form are practically without competition in the way in which they determine the American theatrical scene on the national level, that the coloured man is not a worthy or full personality, capable of reflecting the true climaxes and depths of human life and suffering, thinking and emotion on the stage. Even in 1936, the drama scholar Arthur Hobson Quinn, in his comprehensive "History of the American Drama", tried to tell the playwrights that "the negro, in his wistful, exalted and emotional phases, is much better suited to the stage than when he is being exploited as the symbol of a struggle for racial equality".[1]

However, the course of history could not be stopped or turned back even by such reac-

tionary "advice" as this. It was precisely that decade which brought the greatest economic shock ever experienced by the capitalist system of the United States which put the Black American, as a dramatic figure, in a new light and brought an entirely new quality of artistic representation in his individual experience of life and in his social position in the USA. This was not, of course, an isolated phenomenon which suddenly emerged but a logical development. It was closely linked with the changed social conditions - such as the harsh deterioration in the social and economic plight of the black population - and the upsurge in working class cultural activities (especially the Workers' Theatre Movement). So it can be seen as the expression of increased activity and greater political consciousness on the part of the working class.

A significant role in this process was played by the Communist Party of the USA. In 1929, it had established itself as a Marxist-Leninist party, devoting more marked attention than hitherto to the problems and situation of the Afro-Americans, clearly outlining the class-character of the so-called race problem. In the election campaign of 1932, it nominated the well-known workers' leader William Z. Foster as a candidate for the Presidency. But for the Vice-Presidency it nominated the Negro leader James W. Ford. He was a former steelworker from Alabama whose grandfather was lynched by the Ku Klux Klan. The election programme called for equal rights for the Afro-Americans, drastic action on the part of the State against any kind of discrimination against the black population and the organized struggle of white and black workers against their common oppressors.[2]

It was above all the writers of the younger generation who took a lively interest in all the real social problems and contradictions with which they were surrounded and who used their pens to wage a determined struggle against backwardness, deceit and deliberate manipulation by capitalist monopolies in the relations between the black and white masses. Playwrights of both races joined the struggle and made the Afro-American, his suffering and his heroic fight for respect and equality the subject of their creative work. They moved away from the traditional stereotype figures and helped to destroy the myth carefully cultivated by the ruling class of the intellectual incapacity and inferiority of the black man which was allegedly due to biological factors and to the will of God. As a generalization, the following can be stated for the period of the 1930's:

- The Afro-American was no longer shown on the stage as an "exotic creature" or naive and impudent domestic but was "discovered" as the hard-working Negro fighting for existence.
- A "new hero" emerged: the black man who was conscious both of his race and of his class, i.e. a dramatic figure who has recognized that racism is a class-question which is an inherent part of American imperialism and is deliberately guided by the ruling power structure.
- It was above all in the plays of the proletarian and revolutionary authors that the relationship between whites and blacks was shown in an entirely new light: for the first time in the history of the American drama, the character of a white person is introduced who, from a clear political and ideological concept (Marxist-Leninist), consciously and without strings helps the Negro people in their fight for human dignity and equality.
- For the first time, real and vital issues of racist conflicts were put on the stage, to some extent even in documentary form (as in connection with the infamous case of the Scottsboro Boys) and the inhuman behaviour of many white people (expecially in the Southern states) toward the black population was depicted more openly and was consequently even more strongly attacked than in the preceding years.
- Finally, this decade produced a number of black playwrights who, with their socio-critical plays, even to some extent broke into the commercial theatre. The outstanding example of this is Langston Hughes' "Mulatto" (1935) with 270 performances at a theatre on Broadway.

Two plays from this time show these new qualities in American drama in particularly examplary fashion: "Scottsboro, Limited" (1931) by Langston Hughes and "Stevedore" (1934) by Paul Peters and George Sklar. Both plays can certainly serve as guides for the young black protest drama of the

present time which not by chance is attempting to link up with the cultural traditions of the "Red Decade". "Scottsboro, Limited" is the direct artistic confrontation of a young black author with a topical event which was soon to achieve national and international significance and has become a model case of chauvinist race and class justice on the one hand and of victory for worldwide solidarity by progressive black and white forces on the other. At the end of March 1931, in Scottsboro, Alabama, nine young Negroes were thrown into jail for the alleged rape of two white girls and, except for the youngest, a boy of thirteen years, were sentenced to death by the electric chair. Thanks to the immediate initiative of the Communist Party and of the International Labor Defense (led by the distinguished Afro-American lawyer and politician William L. Patterson), it was possible to prevent the executions from taking place, as a first success. However, it was still a question of almost two decades before this attempt at legal lynching was defeated. Langston Hughes published his poetic one-act play in the "New Masses", a Marxist politico-cultural journal, in November 1931 and, completely in the spirit of the proletarian revolutionary artists, used art as a weapon - a weapon in the fight to free the wrongfully convicted black lads. The author leaves no doubt as to his own standpoint and makes it unmistakably clear that the communists unreservedly take sides with their black and oppressed brothers and that here it is a question of a class confrontation which calls for the union of all anti-racist forces, whatever the colour of their skin. But especially worth noting here is the fact that Hughes, in this dramatic work, which incidentally owes a great deal to the agitprop theatre of the time, also widens the horizon, goes from an individual case to the essence of the problem and identifies the Scottsboro affair as something which is inherent in the system. This is also the reason why the play ends with a specific appeal for unity of action by black and white workers and for a common struggle for a better world ("Black and White together/Will fight the great fight"), with the audience being directly drawn into this and compelled to take sides.

The second outstanding play about the actual situation of the Afro-Americans in American society of the thirties is "Stevedore", which was staged by the Theatre Union in 1934. It was written jointly by Paul Peters and George Sklar and was one of the most successful plays of the first professional workers' theatre of the USA. The two white proletarian revolutionary authors give an indication of the same consistent Marxist outlook as Langston Hughes and, logically enough, come to the same conclusions although the plot and the presentation differ considerably from the first-mentioned play. Even today, by reason of its ideological clarity and artistic impact, this full-length play occupies a special place in the American drama. "Stevedore" depicts in a dramatically convincing form the relations between blacks and whites in the United States in a new and revolutionary manner which had never before been seen on an American stage. In impressive fashion, the action shows that the capitalist exploiter is the common foe of the black and white workers and that he makes use of the race prejudices which he deliberately encourages and of the backwardness in the thinking of both sides to his own advantage. In their lecture at the first "American Writers' Congress" in 1935, Michael Blankfort and Nathaniel Buchwald had the following to say about "Stevedore": "This play...was more than a contribution to the theatre. It proclaimed, once and for all, and for the first time, the heroic position of the Negro working class. It has become a standard bearer for the Negro masses and has been taken to heart by them as nothing else has."[3] And in her biography of Robeson this was written by Marie Seton about it: "For the first time in the theatre Negroes were shown fighting for their rights and their lives, with white workers joining them in their resistance to a racist mob. Lonnie Thompson was the first class-conscious Negro character to be the hero of a play and die a heroic death in defence of his union and his people."[4]

Opinions such as these explain why it was precisely this play which became so significant for the development of Paul Robeson as an artist and as a person. When the play was produced at the "Embassy Theatre" in London in 1935, Robeson played the role of the black docker Lonnie Thompson and interpreted it with great artistic

sensitiveness so that this workers' drama was a noteworthy success in London, too. It was at this time that Robeson passed through a decisive phase in his personal confrontation with social reality and in forming his own view of the world.It was particularly after his return to Great Britain from his first visit to the Soviet Union that he had begun to concern himself seriously with Marxism-Leninism and to systematically study the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. A play like "Stevedore" and the role of its black hero were in full accord with his newly acquired insight and gave him the opportunity to fuse artistic genius and ideological conviction with emotional fervour and political clarity in a way which had never been done before. What fascinated him most of all, however, was the basic idea of the play: the solidarity of the black and white workers. The fundamental statement by Karl Marx that "labor cannot emancipate itself in a white skin where in the black it is branded,"[5] seemed to have been taken to heart here and interpreted in a creative way as a doctrine for the working class.

It is then not surprising that Paul Robeson again played the role of a labour leader three years later in a proletarian play produced by the "Unity Theatre" in London. In "Plant in the Sun" by Ben Bengal, Paul Robeson played the trade union organizer and the leader of a sit-down strike in an American factory. This short play for the workers' amateur dramatics group is a didactic work which depicts the gradual development of unity in young workers who were never before in a situation of class struggle such as this. The common cause allows them to think and act in a new way and, from the chaotic indivual ideas of the various workers, a genuine group and class consciousness develops. The performance was a success and this was due not least to the great impact made by this illustrious Afro-American artist who, by virtue of his personality and talent, turned the inexperienced amateur actors from the English proletariat into a convincing ensemble. Of no lesser significance, however, was the fact that here was an outstanding professional artist working directly and closely with an organization for working class culture. Robeson and the actors of "Unity Theatre" came from the same class and it was the consciousness of the common struggle for the common aims which made this fruitful collaboration possible. At the same time, Robeson again demonstrated in his person and by his immediate artistic example how black and white people can work together on the basis of membership of the same class and can make a real contribution to the "Black Liberation Movement". The present conditions have certainly become more complicated and considerably more complex relations have developed since the thirties but the basic experience of Paul Robeson and the Workers' Theatre Movement is neither out of date nor replaceable. "The New Program of the Communist Party U.S.A." of 1969 emphatically states this: "The struggle against racism...is a central part of the class struggle and the basic question facing the entire country today."[6]

The actual continuation of the markedly socio-critical American drama consciously aiming at revolutionary change did not appear until the 1960's. Since the fifties, the American theatre of the ruling culture, subject to the strangle-hold of total commercialization and used as an instrument for manipulation by the class interest of monopoly capitalism, has become an out-and-out entertainment enterprise and a place of escapism, whilst the so-called "Underground Theatre" with its confused, intellectual and anarchistic avant-garde drama of nihilism and despair only represents a pseudo-alternative. It is from the Afro-American theatre an increasingly more powerful stimulus is coming for a new orientation. The wealth of socially relevant dramatic works with something to say from black authors as a contribution to American national literature - beginning, say, with Lorraine Hansberry's successful "A Raisin in the Sun" (1959) - has given hope even to leading theatrical critics of the ruling culture, such as Robert Brustein, that the eternally lamented stagnation and sterility of contemporary American theatre and drama can be overcome and that authors such as James Baldwin, Ossie Davis and LeRoi Jones could become the successors of playwrights such as Clifford Odets, Lillian Hellman or Arthur Miller.[7]

The social reasons for this development are evident. Increased activities of the Civil Rights Movement; polarization of the contending forces; crystallization of the

demands of Afro-Americans, such as "Freedom Now!", "Black Power" as a political force and "Power to the People". All these, plus the sharpening of the confrontation with the racist whites and police brutality during the periods of unrest in the ghettoes of the sixties have produced a new quality in the "Black Liberation Movement". Today, it permits neither a burlesque, sentimental, minstrel-show type depiction of Afro-American life in the earlier Broadway manner nor an above-the-battle position, a noncommittal sympathizing on the part of the white bourgeois author.

Just as with the dramatic treatment of the strike motif in the thirties, the figure of the Afro-American and the so-called race problem in the USA force the author to make a clear statement in the sense of the old union song "Which side are you on?". It is incidentally characteristic that the plays of the few white authors who fully understood what the score was were not performed on Broadway. In fact, Edward Albee had to go abroad to get his short drama "The Death of Bessie Smith" (1960) performed at all, whilst George Sklar's "And People All Around" (1967) and Barrie Stavis' "Harpers Ferry" (1967) only achieved a series of noteworthy performances outside the New York theatre centre. It is precisely the two last-mentioned plays which are entirely in the tradition of the progressive drama of the thirties and, of course, also come from authors who helped shape this decade in the sphere of proletarian revolutionary drama. Sklar, co-author of "Stevedore" to which reference has already been made, in "And People All Around" took the infamous lynching of the three Civil Rights fighters, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, as the background for the personal decision of a young white Southerner for or against humanity and justice. Stavis, known above all for his Galileo drama "Lamp at Midnight" and the documentary play about Joe Hill, "The Man Who Never Died", depicts the same basic conflict on the basis of what is certainly the most famous case in American history, the heroic and consistent efforts of John Brown for the immediate liberation of the black slaves. On the basis of historically proven facts, both plays solve the situation of conflict quite clearly in accord with the aims of the freedom struggle of the Afro-American people and portray really human attitudes on the part of white U.S. citizens.

However, one of the characteristic features in the development of American dramatic art in the past decade is that the relations between the black and white populations of the country, which have developed into the main internal and socio-political problem of the USA, have become the domain par excellence of Afro-American playwrights. The noteworthy number of dramatic works from the pens of black authors reflects the whole complexity of the actual socio-political situation of the Afro-Americans in a period of growing aggressiveness in the imperialist policy of oppression and, simultaneously, the variety in the forms of the struggle against and resistance to white supremacy and racism in the USA.

Living in the same ghettoes and under the same conditions of discrimination as the overwhelming majority of their race, the Afro-American playwrights have become real writers of the people. The pressure of their environment and everyday experience compelled them to take this direction and from the very start precluded a retreat to an ivory tower of art. As propagandists and agitators, enlighteners and mass educators, they are aiding the consolidation of the politico-moral and cultural unity of the black minority.

They regard as their main task the countering and repulsion of the influence of the dominating American or Western culture, of which LeRoi Jones once said that it "is committed to the idea of individualism, ego-satisfaction, and personal gain".[8] Just as the "gradualism" of the Civil Rights Movement gave way to revolutionary demands insisting on immediate change, so did the thesis of separation and of "otherness" begin to replace that of assimilation and integration.

Since the beginning of the sixties, in particular, the call is again being made for the constitution of a "Black Nation" and for the emergence of a cultural system with its own laws for the Afro-American population. This emergence of a "Black national and cultural consciousness" also includes the elaboration of new standards and the establishment of aesthetic images of its own, based both on the Afro-American and on the Black African line of

tradition. Study of the African heritage and identification with it has begun on a broad scale. The study and the "discovery" of their own African past, of the variety of tribal habits and customs and of cultural achievements are promoting - and this applies especially to the young Afro-Americans - an historical consciousness and aesthetic appreciation of a kind unparalleled hitherto. The disengagement from the white sphere of influence, which nolens volens has stamped the intellectual profile of the black authors, and the confrontation with the code of values of the dominating American system of society is a process which is exerting a profound influence on personality structure and which, to some extent, is of an extremely contradictory character. Often it is encumbered with the conscious or unconscious adoption of petty-bourgeois anarchistic, nationalist, pseudo-radical and terrorist ideas and therefore is diverted into apolitical, anthropological or socio-psychological directions. The uncompromising attitudes and the hostility resulting from the actual situation towards the white system of open and covert repression, naturally involve the danger of an indiscriminate "anti-white" attitude. They can lead to the incorrect hypothesis that the entire white world is degenerate, doomed to downfall, and incapable of modelling the true self-realization of Man. Although the Communist Party of the USA has unceasingly declared that racism is an integral part of the capitalist system and of imperialism, many Afro-American intellectuals and artists have not yet been able fully to accept the class nature and character of the so-called race problem.

Within the framework of his historical task in American society, the black playwright of the present time is faced with a complicated dual function and challenged by a twofold problem. In the first place, it is a question of the merciless and uncompromising confrontation of the racist white people with their own deformed mirror-image. In artistic form it demonstrates to them the whole range of their inhumanity both individual and social. It both unmasks and accuses; it is social criticism and a declaration of readiness for combat. It reflects the conflict between black and white not only in skin colour but in morals and ethics, too. Secondly, the black author turns to his fellow Afro-American citizens. He describes their worries and sorrows, their strength and weakness, their good and bad deeds so that they recognize themselves and their human dignity; they perceive that they are beings worthy of a place in literature; they see through the pattern of the "Negro type" disseminated by the white mass-media and learn to reject it. So this writing deals with the modelling of a new human image and education, with selfcriticism and moral renewal - with conflicts among the black people themselves which of course are always shown to arise through living in a repressive social environment.

With the thrust into the ideological and psychological terrain of the adversary, the attack is preferably concentrated on the so-called liberals or those whites who, as individuals, are apparently endeavouring to overcome all racist prejudice, seek partnership with their black fellow-men but cannot drop a patriarchal and patronizing tone, are ready to give "good advice" on the waging of the struggle for Black Liberation but draw back in a conventional manner when the cards are down. The attitude of many contemporary Afro-American authors - such as James Baldwin, LeRoi Jones or Lorraine Hansberry - towards the "liberals" is aptly reflected by a remark of Malcolm X on this question: "For one, when a white man comes to me and tells me how liberal he is, the first thing I want to know, is he a nonviolent liberal, or the other kind. I don't go for any nonviolent white liberals. If you are for me and my problems - when I say me, I mean us, our people - then you have to be willing to do as old John Brown did. And if you're not of the John Brown school of liberals, we'll get you later - later."[9] So-called liberalism in the question of the relations between black and white people in the United States, through its retreat before every radical and rapid solution to the unbearable situation, has revealed itself as hypocrisy and, when examined in an objective manner, furthers the interests of the racists, whether this is the conscious intention or not. For this reason and justly so, it is rejected by the Afro-Americans.

In the plays and dramatic scenes in which the authors concern themselves pri-

marily with the Afro-American sphere, the criticism is chiefly aimed at the conciliating elements in their own ranks, at the "Uncle Toms", who have made their "private peace" with the white system of suppression, who bear all humiliations with a smile or even consciously imitate the white middle-class way of life. Above all, they scorn also those who let themselves be used as a front or as a liberal cloak for the white power structure and, as some of the few privileged persons of this structure, help to conceal the true situation of the black masses.

In the efforts being made in the artistic confrontation with the white oppressors, another trend is evident in more recent drama, namely the deliberate shock-effect on the saturated, narrow-minded middle-class citizen and principal supporter of racist chauvinism. Some Afro-American writers are attempting to provoke the white Babbitt by plain and frank language in which not even the concentrated use of obscenities is excluded and, at the same time, by a supposed wealth of relationships between the social and sexual aspects, to make clear to him, in the private sexual sphere, the total perversion of his social behaviour. However, the over-emphasis on shock and provocation reduces the power and unequivocalness of the social message. Not only has the dominating culture, in a way which is practically masochistic, found profitable pleasure in this kind of aggressive literature and drama and even has it published in mass editions, but in the meantime this means of protest has also changed to a thoroughly commercialized instrument of diversion. Also plays such as "Blues for Mister Charlie" (1964) by James Baldwin, "Dutchman" (1964), "The Slave" (1964), "The Toilet" (1964) and "Slave Ship" (1969) by LeRoi Jones or the numerous short plays by Ed Bullins reflect the whole complexity of this situation and give a particularly clear indication of the problems involved in the analysis of works which have resulted from the sad sphere of life and experience of precisely those people who merit our entire sympathy and active solidarity. "Blues for Mister Charlie", for instance, which has found attentive audiences in the GDR as well, is based on an actual social event: the unpunished murder of a Negro boy and a well-known Civil Rights leader. It reveals the fragility of the claim to material and intellectual supremacy of the white middle-class world but attempts to shift specifically social motivations to the sphere of sexual psychology and to shock the white middle-class individual as the incarnation of the impotence of an entire race and civilization which see brutality and terror as the sole answer. Only a sensitive and consistently Marxist-Leninist interpretation - such as that by the "Kellertheater" of Leipzig - is capable of representing the real social character of the play, with the elimination of the hypertrophy of the sexually related vocabulary, and of making it "both an artistic and social experience".[10] It is certainly self-deception to believe that what is pornographic can be switched over to become socio-critical. It is also without doubt a poor speculation when LeRoi Jones declares that the "Euro-American degeneration ... the white revolution of drugs and nakedness" should be supported for tactical reasons since it "weakens the hand that holds our fetters".[11]

Seen as a whole, Afro-American drama since the end of the fifties no longer contents itself with the depiction of the life and sufferings of the Black American in order to show him, so to speak, as a human creature worthy of respect and to warn white people of the necessity for understanding, reform or solidarity, but is indicating more and more bluntly a politico-ideological aim, namely the activation of the struggle of the Afro-Americans for equality in all social fields and the unconditional readiness to fight for the implementation of just this demand. Every opportunity is used for this: on-Broadway and off-Broadway and, above all and to an increased extent, their own professional and non-professional theatre companies and other "Black Arts" institutions. A broad range of artistic devices is also employed and, depending on the line of tradition and sphere of influence, determines the formal character of the plays. Critical-realist means of presentation are used in harmony with a specific social criticism (as in Lorraine Hansberry in particular) or are linked with stream-of-consciousness techniques (as in James Baldwin); satirical, farcelike burlesque or folklore elements (as in the

plays of Ossie Davis or Douglas Turner Ward) are utilized to the same extent as the modernistic alienation effects of the absurd and surrealist theatres (e.g. in the dramas of Adrienne Kennedy and William W. Mackey); naturalistic details for the depiction of slum and ghetto life (as in Lonne Elder) appear side by side with borrowings from Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty" (as in plays by LeRoi Jones and Ed Bullins). Common to all of them, however, is the passionate and very often also aggressive character of their protest and a basic ideological position which is revolutionary and insists on a change in the social system, all stylistic details and techniques being subordinate to this aim - at least subjectively. LeRoi Jones, the most outstanding of the militant dramatists of the younger generation and one of the initiators of the Black Arts Movement, as far back as 1964 called for a "Revolutionary Theatre", which means for him a primarily Afro-American revolutionary theatre in which the drama is used as a political weapon which "should force change; it should be change", which "is shaped by the world, and moves to reshape the world". Jones also declares that "The Revolutionary Theatre must Expose ... must Accuse and Attack anything that can be accused and attacked."[12]

For the great majority of the Afro-American playwrights of the present time, the theatre as no more than a place of entertainment is quite simply an absurdity. For them, the stage - as at the time of the Workers' Theatre Movement of the thirties - is a field of agitation. Consequently, there had to be a renewal of the "street theatre" with short "street plays", the emergence of a Black Revolutionary Agitprop movement. There is already a noteworthy number of mobile agitprop groups and plays in which artists and authors speak out directly and exclusively for the black population itself. At street corners and on open spaces, in front of schools and on the campus, they try to enlighten and educate people with a plot which is limited to a few, simplified facts about the main circumstances of life. Ed Bullins, himself the author of a whole series of agitprop plays for the "street theatre", has set out the main purpose of "Black Revolutionary Agitprop": "Communicating to masses of Black people. Contact with Black crowds. Communication with diverse classes of people, the Black working class, or with special groups (e.g., winos, pool hall brothers, prostitutes, pumps, hypes, etc.) who would not ordinarily come or be drawn into the theatre."[13]

Attempts such as these by a black revolutionary agitprop theatre are certainly an enrichment of Afro-American drama and theatrical practice and also an important step towards close links between art and life, between the theatre and politics. However, there is still a need - and not only here in this artistic instrument of mass agitation - for further ideological clarification of the essential objectives so that a restriction of the field of vision to an undifferentiated black-white conflict does not occur. Langston Hughes can serve as an example here. He and Paul Robeson showed the way as far back as the thirties! Lorraine Hansberry, in her realist plays, successfully and consistently explored this path until a terrible disease took this young and highly talented playwright from our midst. Above all, the works she has left us, such as "Les Blancs" (1966) and the scenic montage by Robert Nemiroff of the life and literary career of the author, "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black" (1969), are evidence of her ability to show even complicated processes of the Black Liberation Movement of the recent past in a dramatically effective and class-oriented manner. Nothing expresses this more clearly than the words of an African freedom fighter in "Les Blancs" with which he counters the stereotyped ideas of a "liberal" American journalist: "I shall be honest with you, Mr. Morris. I do not 'hate' a l l white men - but I desperately wish that I did. It would make everything infinitely easier! But I am afraid that, among other things, I have s e e n the slums of Liverpool and Dublin and the caves above Naples. I have s e e n Dachau and Anne Frank's attic in Amsterdam. I have seen too many rawknuckled Frenchmen coming out of the Metro at dawn and too many popeyed Italian children - to believe that those who raided Africa for three centuries ever 'loved' the white race either. I would like to be simpleminded for you, but - I cannot. I have - s e e n ."[14] James Baldwin could be the successor to Lorraine Hansberry. From his "Open Letter"

to Angela Davis, we may justifiably hope that in the near future he will master the artistic and dramatic aspects of that which he has already correctly grasped in theory when he wrote to the imprisoned university professor and communist: "We know that we, the blacks, and not only we, the blacks, have been, and are, the victims of a system whose only fuel is greed, whose only god is profit."[15]

However, a sure characteristic of both the more recent and the older Afro-American drama - even when account is taken of all the variety of its essential and formal aspects - is that plays by Afro-American authors are not just interesting documents of a literary genre resulting from the events of the age but at the same time imply the sum of experience accumulated in the course of more than 350 years by people who have become Americans against their will. It is true that these plays are part of American national culture and literature but just as little as the 25 million Afro-Americans enjoy the full rights of citizens of the United States are they a reflection of the ruling culture in the USA. These are plays of protest, of direct and indirect accusation, and of the long and sad history of oppression and resistance to oppression - the expression of the "other America". They consequently maintain and continue the democratic-humanist and proletarian-revolutionary heritage and, together with other literary works by black and white progressive authors, form an important part of the second culture in the United States, i.e. to quote Lenin, they are "elements of a democratic and socialist culture".[16]

We have come together here to pay tribute to a great Afro-American artist, an untiring fighter against racism and imperialism and to take account of the stimulus of his personality for the struggle of anti-imperialist forces throughout the world. In a particularly moving and beautiful poetic vision, the unforgettable Lorraine Hansberry expressed Robeson's standpoint, a standpoint which we share. In "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black", these are the words of Robeson's former colleague on his newspaper "Freedom" which she herself addresses to us: "We know where we're going and we know how we're going to get there ... It's going to spill out and over the world from our art like the mighty waves of a great spiritual! ... I could see the bridge across the chasm. It was made up of a band of angels of art, hurling off the souls of twenty million! I saw Jimmy Baldwin and Leontyne, and Lena and Harry and Sammy, and then there was Charlie White and Nina Simone and - - Lord have mercy, P a u l w a s b a c k ![17]

Notes

1 Quinn, A.H.: "A History of the American Drama. From the Civil War to the Present Day". New York 1936, p. 284

2 See "Culture and the Crisis". An Open Letter to the Writers, Artists, Teachers, Physicians, Engineers, Scientists, and other Professional Workers of America. New York 1932.

3 Blankfort, M./Buchwald, N.: "Social Trends in the Modern Drama". In: "American Writers Congress". London 1935, p.133.

4 Seton, M.: "Paul Robeson". London 1958, p. 102.

5 Marx, K.: "Capital". New York 1939, p.287.

6 "New Program of the Communist Party U.S.A.", New York 1970, p. 58

7 Brustein, R.: "Seasons of Discontent. Dramatic Opinions 1959-1965". London 1966, p. 311 f.

8 Jones, LeRoi: "Home. Social Essays". New York 1966, p. 219.

9 "Malcolm X Speaks". Selected Speeches and Statements. Ed. by George Breitman. New York 1966, p. 225.

10 Diskussion um "Blues". In: "Leipziger Volkszeitung", 23.Mai 1969.

11 See "New York Times". Quoted after Sahl, Hans: "Ketten werden abgeschüttelt". In: "Die Welt", 27. Februar 1970.

12 Jones, LeRoi: "Home", p. 210 ff.

13 Bullins, E.: "A Short Statement on Street Theatre". In: "The Drama Review". Summer 1968, p. 93.

14 Hansberry, L.: "Les Blancs". Adapted by Robert Nemiroff. 1970. MS 1/3/48.

15 Baldwin, J.: "An Open Letter to my Sister, Miss Angela Davis". In: "The New York Review of Books". January 7, 1971, p. 15 f.

16 Lenin, W.I.: "Kritische Bemerkungen zur nationalen Frage." In: W.I. Lenin, "Über Kultur und Kunst", Berlin 1960. S. 209.

17 "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black. The World of Lorraine Hansberry In Her Own

Words". Adapted by Robert Nemiroff. New York 1971, pp. 98 f.

PAUL MORGAN
The Struggle to Free Angela Davis

I want to thank the president of the Paul Robeson Committee in the GDR, Prof. Dr. Loeser, for allowing me to say a few words about the struggle to free Angela Davis in the United States. The inscription on the button I am wearing reads 'Her Fight is My Fight - Free Angela Davis'. We, who are in the midst of the struggle to free Angela Davis, know that this is so. And it is a task of the Angela Davis Committees in the United States to make every American aware that Angela's fight is indeed his fight.

Soon after Angela Davis was arrested by the FBI under trumped up charges of murder, kidnapping and conspiracy, two major committees were formed in the United States: the National United Committee to free Angela Davis, in Los Angeles, and the New York Committee to free Angela Davis, where I am a volunteer worker. We in New York are responsible for co-ordinating the work in the eastern region of the country. There are altogether about 200 local committees in the United States, all made up of volunteers.

Our primary task and our ultimate aim is to enlist all the progressive forces in America and to forge a broad democratic coalition around the struggle to free Angela. Naturally, the Communist Party plays a leading role in this. But before this can be achieved we have to overcome the existing anti-communist and racist attitudes that are still prevalent in many people. We have to educate people and we have to demonstrate to them that the attack on Angela Davis is part and parcel of a concerted attack by a reactionary government on all the progressive forces in the United States. And that if the American Government's attempt on the life of Angela Davis is not halted now, then all the democratic forces in America will be in danger!

As the American writer James Baldwin has put it in an open letter to Angela Davis, "We must fight for your life as though it were our own, which it is, and render impossible with our bodies the corridor to the gas chamber. For if they take you in the morning they will be coming for us that night."

Angela Davis has pointed out repeatedly and she is right, that there are many political prisoners in America today, all of them charged with imaginary crimes. The method of framing its political prisoners on murder charges is nothing new for the American ruling class. This is the way in which it has traditionally tried to get rid of all those who have threatened their rule. And Angela Davis, like Tom Mooney, and Joe Hill, and Bill Haywood, and so many others before her, has become a threat to the ruling class.

She has become dangerous because of her courageous fight for black liberation, and because of her membership in the Communist Party. She has become a symbol to all the oppressed and the exploited in the United States, and especially to the millions of black men and women who have for centuries been the most exploited and oppressed in our country. It is the task of the American Committees to free Angela Davis, to make the American people aware that Angela is fighting for a better America for all of them, and that therefore the attack on Angela is also an attack on them.

Our speakers, such as Charly Mitschell, John Abt, Margaret Burnham, Louis Patterson and many others carry this message to all parts of the United States. They speak in schools, in universities, they speak in churches and in labour union halls. They work tirelessly, because they know how important and how urgent the task is. Although much remains to be done we are making progress. There is evidence that more and more people are overcoming their anti-communist and racist feelings and are joining the fight.

But in order to be successful in our struggle to free Angela we need the support of people from all over the world. Nixon and Agnew and Reagan must be shown that the people of the world will simply not permit them to put Angela into the gas chamber.

There is much support from all over the world, but it is no exaggeration to say that the support shown by the people of the German Democratic Republic has been outstanding and exemplary. Hundreds of thousands of letters from all over the GDR have come to the committees in New York and Los Angeles, and

to Angela's cell in San Raphael. Letters and telegrammes demanding her release are sent to Reagan and Nixon.

This evidence of international solidarity is of the greatest help to us. I have spoken to some groups of young people in the GDR and I was happy to see they are very real concerned for this brave American patriot. My message to them has been to continue and intensify their work in our common struggle. It will undoubtedly be a long and hard fight, but I am convinced that together we will win.

JOHN HENRIK CLARKE
Paul Robeson and His Background

In addition to thanking the committee for the invitation I want to look at Paul Robeson - very briefly, because I am a teacher of history as well as an editor; not specifically at the man but at the kind of cloth that the man came out of. I want to look at him through the traditions of his own people and the historical forces that shaped him.

But first I want to look at the forces that brought him to that confrontation with the United States and I want to end by telling you something that we try to achieve at "Freedomways" with this special issue on the life of Paul Robeson. Because this is the second time we have attempted to look at the life of Paul Robeson, and somehow Paul Robeson is like a mountain and you are battling that mountain trying to understand it. And each time you go to the mountain there is something new to be understood.

Until we can understand what happened in the 15th and in the 16th centuries with the rise of Europe in the attempt to adjust the slave trade in the colonial system that followed, we are not going to understand what Paul Robeson was opposing. What he was opposing was an essential thing, - with the rise of the slave trade, with the rise of colonialism and with the rise of capitalism - that is the inhumanization of most of the world's people in order to justify the existence of that system.

What Paul Robeson was saying with his life, with his songs is, that <u>I am a human being.</u> I came from a people who have a culture, I came from a people with a past and so, therefore, I came from a people with a future.

Now, this situation would come into being when there was an attempt to justify the mass of labour taken out of Africa to open up the so-called New World. And yet the tradition in which Paul Robeson found himself was not particularly new, because his people fought to keep from getting on the boats, they fought on the boats, and they fought to keep from getting off from the boats, and they got off from the boats and continued to fight. He came out of a tradition of resistance and this tradition of resistance is as old as the business of the trade itself. And what he is reflecting is several dimensions of the impact of Black Americans on the so-called New World.

There were several impacts, the first two have been totally ignored. The first impact was the obvious pre-colonial presence of Africans in the New World. The second impact: the number of black explorers, sailors, technicians, with the Spanish conquistadores. These were people who made a mark, African people, on America before 1619, the formal beginning of slavery in Virginia.

He also comes out of that tradition of resistance that started with the massive slave revolts in the 19th century, the most noted of which were those led by Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner and Gabriel Prosset. After these revolts the Blacks would produce a small thinking class, a small class of freed men or escaped Blacks who had learned how to read. And learning how to read, they would address themselves to different aspects of his problem. These were the petitioners. I mention this solely because Paul Robeson in many ways was a man, who in addition to asserting himself, petitioned a society for the recognition of his manhood. And as these traditions were set in motion fully a hundred years before the birth of Paul Robeson, these traditions developed among the black abolitionists in the period leading to the conflict that is called the Civil War, and after the Civil War.

He never forgot the tradition of the black ministers, and some of the most dynamic of these black ministers, Bishop Turner, Bishop Harley, men around Frederick Douglass, Samuel Ringleworth, Henry Harlem, and so on. These men used religion as an instrument of force for liberation as Paul

Robeson would later use his art as an instrument for liberation and for the restoration of the basic dignity of a whole people.

When he was born in 1898, black people were trying to recover from the betrayal of the Reconstruction. That experiment in democracy that lasted only about eleven years until the South and the North got together and went back on their promise. He was born just at a time when the whites had appointed a leader for Black America, a leader named Booker T. Washington. And he was the first of a number of leaders that whites would pick out from among us and appoint as a leader and filter all information and moneys through him as an element of control.

When he was growing up in America, he grew up at a time when W. E. B. Du Bois and other black radicals had established the Niagara movement that had become the NAACP. When he began his studies at Rutgers University on the eve of the First World War, Blacks were going through a period of illusions and a period when they seriously questioned their role in this country. As he developed and began to make a name for himself on the stage and began to use his art as an instrument of awakening in his people a sense of pride in their tradition, Blacks were beginning to lose faith in themselves as a people, principally because the depression was setting in and we had no national voices of consequence. W. E. B. Du Bois had retired to Atlanta University and was teaching. His difficulties with the NAACP had destroyed part of his effectiveness within that organization, but it was Paul Robeson in the thirties, who would project with his art and who would use art as an instrument, who would fashion it into a symbol of struggle.

In his work with the Council of African Affairs he would, with others, call attention to the role of Africa in world affairs, the colonial system in Africa. And the Council of African Affairs would help to set in motion the ideological basis for the freedom explosion in Africa. And it is fortunate that this has not been forgotten.

In the issue on Paul Robeson, the current issue of "Freedomways", we tried to make an assessment of his life, using as many dimensions as we can. We have tried to look at him as a great cultural figure. We tried to take it beyond just being a singer. We made an assessment of his role in the movies, his role as an aspiration to two generations of black youth and as we assessed it, something came to our mind: it is that Paul Robeson helped to bring black people in America to where they are right now!

A better understanding of Paul Robeson may well move us beyond where we are right now. We are people literally rehearsing for nation building, rehearsing for nationness, we are standing on what I call the black and beautiful plateau and we have to find a way to move beyond the blackness. What we are learning, because we are understanding what he was and what he intended for us to be more and more, we are learning that being black and beautiful is not quite enough, because the world is not ruled by blackness or beauty. The world is ruled by people who know how to have power. We are learning that our weakness is more the cause of our trouble than our blackness and we are looking around for allies, because we know that if we are going to make the new age of man, we are going to have have allies.

Now take the example of Paul Robeson reaching out to become concerned not just with black workers but with workers all over the world. He gave his people a picture that they need. And they need to know that all white people are not their enemies, that there are white people suffering some of the same things they are suffering and that they are potentially an ally for the Blacks in making that kind of a world where no man need walk in fear.

At college I teach both black and white students and that's a very good teaching experience. In Atlanta University I teach all black students and that's also a great teaching experience. One of my white students I once gave examples of the kinds of papers I wanted. She chose to write on the origins of Egypt, and I told her that, if you look at history honestly you're going to discover something that's going to shock you very much. If you look at the history of black people honestly you are going to have to find out something about the impact of blacks on early civilization. You are going to have to find out that the actual Egyptians were not white people, they came from the central African and then, kind of to tease her, I said that you are also going to have to find out that Cleopatra did not look like Elizabeth Taylor. She said 'Gee Golly'.

What I am trying to get across is, there are so many young white students and white people with no vested interest in maintaining all of the garbage about race, because they have no vested interest in maintaining it. They are potential allies of the black people and our struggle for the kind of world where no man need walk in hunger and where man can walk in peace. I think because they do not have, and very few of the young black people have, any vested interest in maintaining capitalism, they might build a world-wide socialist system that will have some brotherhood that man can respect.

They might rule, building this, and through the inspiration of a life like Paul Robeson's, make the kind of a world where no man need to celebrate his colour and no man need to apologize for his colour. This new age of man, where men can look at other men from other nations with different religions and with different culture and say 'brother'. This may well be the finishing of the mission of Paul Robeson by the youth of his generation, and it might well be part of the legacy that his people will leave the world.

FRANZ LOESER
Conclusion

Dear friends, we are approaching the end of our symposium and it is my somewhat difficult task to bring these discussions to a conclusion.

We have been privileged to listen to many outstanding speakers - veterans of our communist movement, young students, workers, scientists and our guests from the Soviet Union, the USA, Canada, Great Britain and South Africa. It would be presumptuous of me to attempt to summarize the great variety and richness of deep and moving ideas and opinions which have been expressed here. Rather I hope to be able to carry out the proposal that the many important contributions to this symposium should be published.

I am convinced that our symposium has achieved more than a scientific presentation of the significance of Paul Robeson's work; it has indeed also been a concrete expression of the passionate commitment of the citizens of our Republic to the cause of democratic liberties, to the release of all political prisoners in the USA, to the campaign against US aggression in Vietnam and, above all, to the movement for the release of Angela Davis. Our symposium is a manifestation of our peoples' solidarity with progressive America and, even more, it is an integral part of the mighty international anti-imperialist movement.

I am sure you will all agree with me when I say that we have been able to achieve the aims we set ourselves at the beginning of this symposium because of the active and constructive contribution made by every participant.
It is with the greatest pleasure that I express my sincere gratitude to everyone who has participated in our symposium, especially to our guests from abroad and among them particularly our dear Comrade William Patterson. Our thanks are also due to all those who addressed the symposium or made some contribution to the discussions.

Last but by no means least I should like to extend our grateful thanks to the organizers of this event, particularly Mrs. Boegelsack, Mrs. Speyer, Mr. Howitz and the many helpers from the Academy of Arts, all of whom have made such a vital contribution to the success of our symposium.

It is perhaps not customary, but we have nevertheless drafted a resolution from this symposium, the text of which I should like to read to you in conclusion.

R E S O L U T I O N

We have felt it both desirable and necessary to pass a resolution from this symposium on "Paul Robeson and the Struggle waged by the Working Class and Afro-Americans of the USA against Imperialism".

It is not without significance that this symposium has been held in Berlin, the capital of the German Democratic Republic, for less than thirty years ago this city was still in the grip of fascism, that creed of racism and genocide. Its leaders were convinced that their belief in the superiority of one particular race was indestructable. The same myth is still propagated today in South Africa, in Angola, in the United States of America and in many other countries.

Fascism was defeated and destroyed and it is inevitable that in these other countries too the people will overthrow their oppressors and, just as in the GDR and the other socialist countries, build new societies dedicated to the complete equality of all human beings, regardless of race, creed or nationality.

Although we are aware that ultimately racism will be totally eradicated, it is inconceivable that we should sit back and wait for this to come about automatically when every new day brings new threats to peace and humiliation, misery, agony or death to untold numbers of people. For these reasons we chose to hold our symposium dedicated to the dark-skinned Americans who are committed to the fight against imperialism in the International Year against Racism.

Dear Paul Robeson, Dear Angela Davis,

We send you our most sincere greetings. For us you are both outstanding representatives of the liberation movement in the United States and it is therefore your lives and activities to which we have devoted our attention during this symposium. You both understand that the liberation struggle of oppressed racial minorities is an integral part of the international class struggle and that it can only be successful if it is waged by a united anti-imperialist movement. It is for precisely this reason that you were and are savagely persecuted by the very forces which secured the release from prison of the mass murderers of men, women and children.

Working people, scientists and artists from America, Africa and Europe have taken part in this symposium on "Paul Robeson and the Struggle of the Working Class and Afro-Americans of the USA against Imperialism". From now on it will be our task, at work, in informal gatherings or at meetings, to spread the truth about the heroism and dedication of the men and women who suffer discrimination and persecution because of their race, using particularly example of your work and achievements.

Ours is a common struggle being fought in many ways and in many countries throughout the world, and in the forefront are the Vietnamese people who, for their freedom and ours, bear arms and face death daily. They are supported and assisted in every sphere of their economic and cultural life by the power, the sane peaceful policies and the peoples of the community of socialist states as well as by millions of people throughout the world who share their love of peace and freedom.

In our common struggle you both hold particularly important positions, and we are devoting all our energies to securing your release from jail, dearest Angela, and with you every other unjustly imprisoned liberation fighter. We are convinced that in the USA people are increasingly becoming aware that the real aim of your oppressors is to shield the men responsible for the genocide in Vietnam but that we must never allow this to happen.

We join with the millions in the world who love peace and freedom in demanding that those responsible for US imperialism and aggression be tried and punished.

Long live international solidarity !

Freedom for Angela Davis !

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John Henry Clarke, New York, USA
magazine "Freedomways"

Photos:

1.) Paul Robeson in the title-role of the drama "Emperor Jones" by Eugene O'Neill; New York, 1924

2.) Paul Robeson and Flora Robson in "All God's Chillun Got Wings" by Eugene O'Neill; London, Embassy Theatre, 1932

3.) Paul Robeson in the part of Lonnie Thompson in "Stevedore" by George Sklar and Paul Peters; London, Embassy Theatre, 1935

4.) Paul Robeson in film "Show Boat", a musical which he made famous with his song "Ol' Man River"; Hollywood, 1936

5.) "Plant in the Sun" by Ben Bengal; London, Unity Theatre, 1938

6.) "Proud Valley", a film with miners from Wales; London, 1939

7.) "Othello" 1943
8.) "Othello" 1959
Paul Robeson played the title-role in Shakespeare's drama "Othello" three times:
1930 at Savoy Theatre, London, with Peggy Ashcroft as Desdemona
1943 at Shubert Theatre, New York, with Uta Hagen
1959 at Shakespeare's birthplace Stratford-on-Avon with Mary Ure

9.) At the invitation of Sergei Eisenstein, the well-known creator of a new socialist film art, Paul Robeson visited the Soviet Union for the first time in 1934.
From left to right: Paul Robeson, Herbert Marshall, Sergei Eisenstein

10.) 1938: Paul Robeson sings to the Interbrigadists of the Spanish Civil War

11.) Speaking with Negro members of the Lincoln Brigade in Spain, 1938

12.) Paul Robeson's struggle for the rights of the American workers is well known. Many unions showed their appreciation by conferring honorary membership on him. Here, Paul with Rockwell Kent (right) and Harry Bridges, the Chairman of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union in California, 1943

13.) From left to right: Henry Wallace, Dean of Canterbury Hewlett Johnson, Reverend Howard Melish and Paul Robeson at a meeting of the Society of American-Soviet Friendship, New York, 1949

14.) Paul Robeson demonstrating with black and white friends outside the White House in Washington, August 1949, against the race discrimination tolerated by the US Government.

15.) New York, November 1948

16.) Paul Robeson speaking at the celebration in honour of the 150th Anniversary of Puschkin's birth on the 6th of June, 1949, in the House of Trade Union in Moscow.

17.) Paul Robeson speaks at the First World Peace Congress, Paris, April 20th, 1949

18.) Paul Robeson speaking to thousands of communists and social democrats at a First of May meeting in Stockholm, 1949

19.) Paul Robeson sings and addresses a meeting of 25,000 workers in Peekskill near New York. He is protected from the American neofascists and reactionaries who had threatened to assassinate him, by a living wall of black and white trade unionists.

20.) Faces distored with hate, the Peekskill mob screams its abuse of the concert-goers before spreading out on the highway to stone their cars. The symbol of law seems to be enjoying the spectacle.

21.) Paul Robeson with his wife Eslanda, son Pauli, daughter-in-law Marilyn and the grandchildren Susan and David, New York, 1957

22.) Paul Robeson gives a concert to his friends at Tshaikovsky Conservatoire Moscow, September 13th, 1958

23.) At a banquet in his honour given by the Society for Cultural Relations in Moscow, Paul Robeson proposes a toast. On his left Eslanda, his wife; seated: Nina Popova and Tikhon Khrennikov, 1958

24.) He visits the machine tool plant "Krasny Proletary", Moscow, September 1958

25.) Paul Robeson as a guest of honour at the Press Festival of l'Humanité, Paris, September 1959

26.) At the Press Festival of "Neues Deutschland" Paul Robeson sings for his German friends at the Karl-Marx-Avenue, Berlin, June 1960

27.) In appreciation of the work and struggle of Paul Robeson, the GDR government awarded him the medal "Star of Peoples' Friendship". Here, Walter Ulbricht presents this high award to Paul Robeson at a mass meeting in the Central Youth Club in Berlin on October 5th, 1960

28.) The President of the German Academy of Arts, Berlin, Otto Nagel, presents to Paul Robeson the document as Corresponding Member of the Academy; Berlin, October 1958

29.) The President of the German Peace Council presents the German Medal of Peace to the member of the World Peace Council Paul Robeson, Berlin, October, 5th 1960

30.) In October 1960 the Humboldt-University Berlin conferred the title of honorary doctor of philosophy on Paul Robeson. Here, students give a warm welcome to the representative of the other America.

31.) These youngsters on the Karl-Marx-Avenue, Berlin have a friendly chat with Paul.

32.) The presidency during the Symposium 1971; from left to right: Dr. Igor Geyevski, Dr. Paul Wandel, Prof. Dr. Franz Loeser, Prof. Alfred Kurella, William Patterson

33.) William Patterson

34.) Beatrice Rippy-Hollister (singer), Carroll Hollister (pianist), USA

35.) During the Symposium

Photos: Streichen (1); Debenham (3); Vickers (5); Rakhmanov (22); Lazarus (13, 15); Zentralbild (16, 26); Zentralbild/TASS (22, 23, 24); Deutsche Akademie der Künste zu Berlin.

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CONTEMPORARY FILMS
PRESENTS
PAUL
ROBESON in 'The PROUD VALLEY' with
Edward CHAPMAN. Simon LACK.
Edward RIGBY. Rachel THOMAS.

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ACTION! NOT WORDS
JIM CROW MUST GO
JIM CROW MUST GO
YOU CAN'T FOOL ALL THE PEOPLE ALL THE TIME
ANTI-LYNCH
FEPC
PRICE ROLL BACK
DRAFT
FEPC

A Rollcall For Peace
We do not want to go to war over differences between our country and the Soviet Union. Since the Soviet Union has already expressed willingness to sit down with us to straighten out these differences we call upon our President and our Government to arrange conferences with the Soviet Union to settle all outstanding problems and thus bring peace to ourselves and the world.
End the cold war- get together for peace!
National Council of American-Soviet Friendship

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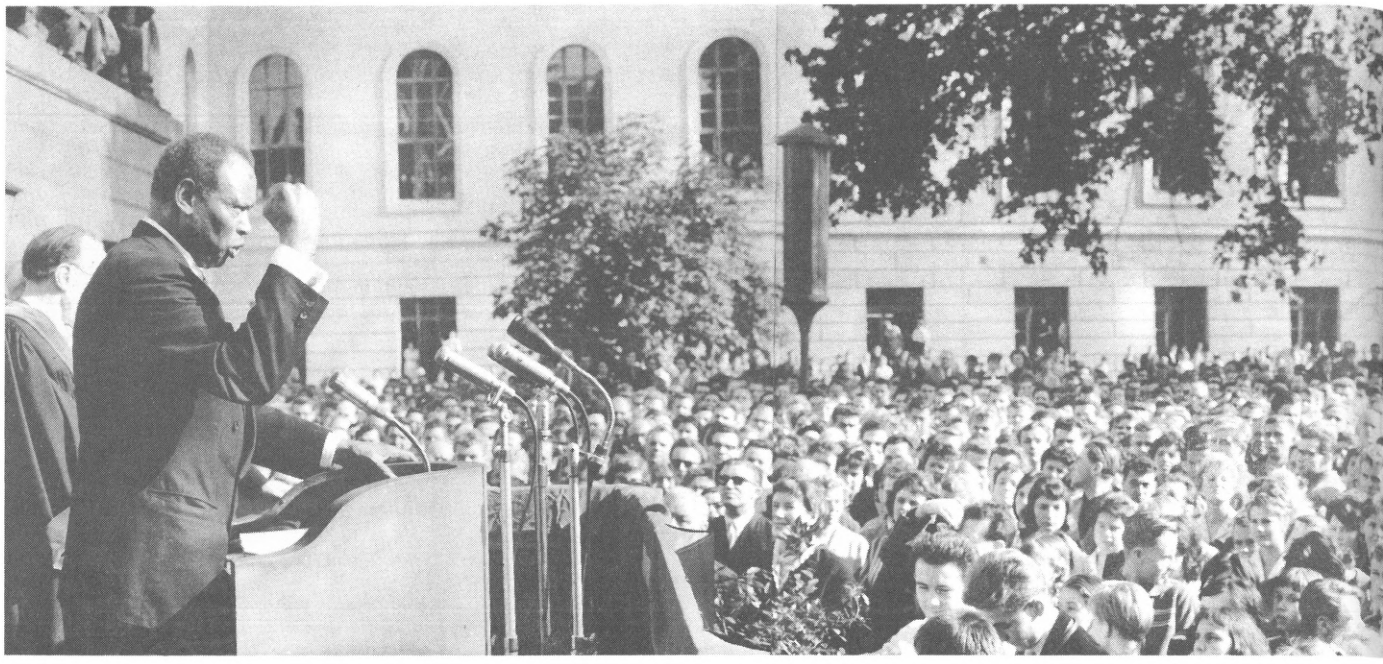

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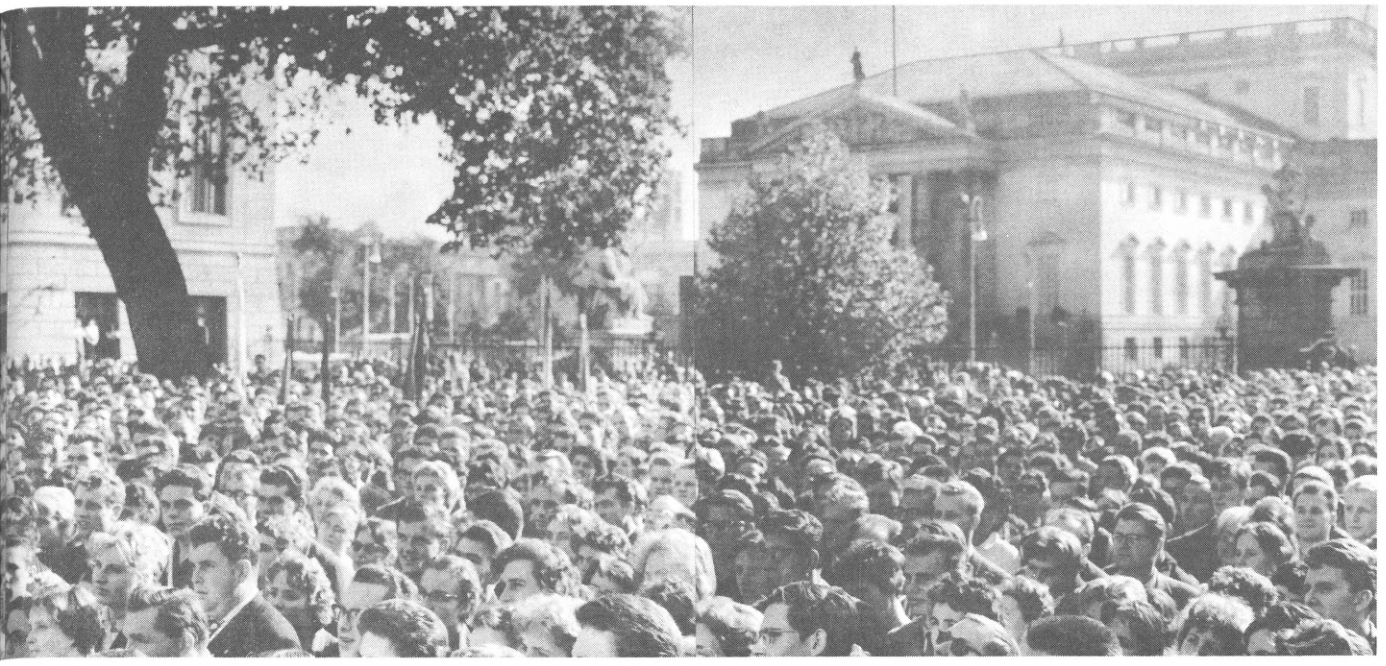

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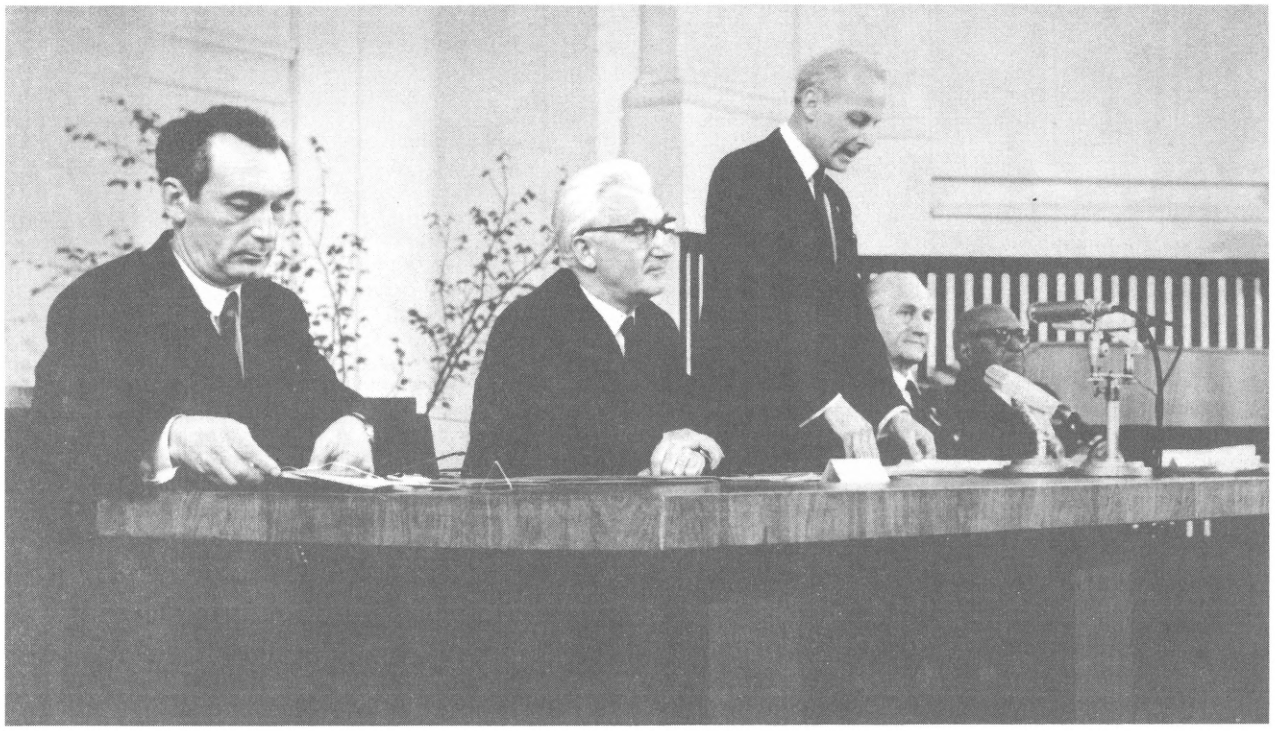

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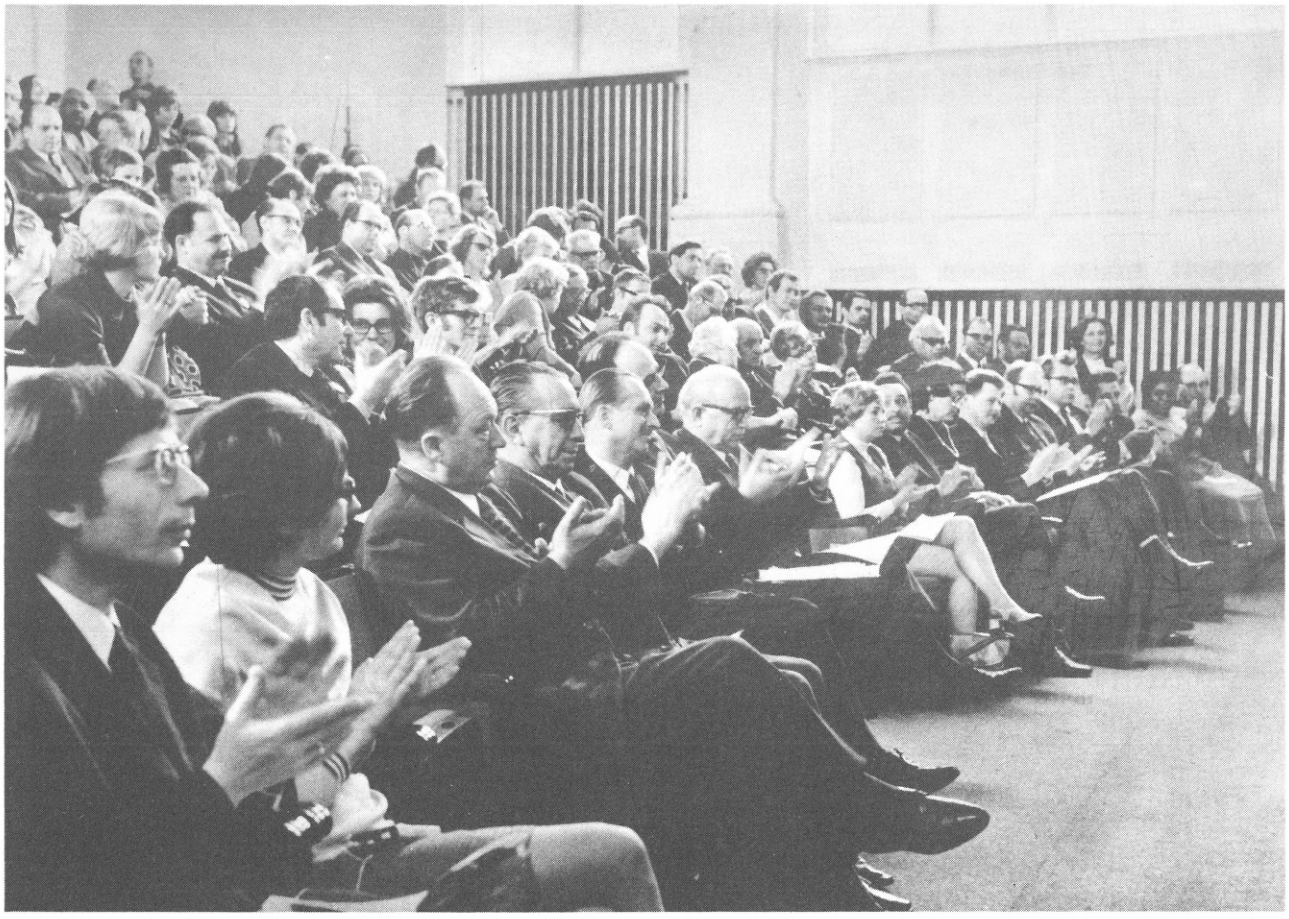

In Preparation:

Number 11

Wolfgang Heinz Fritz Cremer

Galileo Galilei
Representation of a Figure on Stage and in the Fine Arts

With this issue the Fine Arts Section continues its publications on artistic processes. The interpretation of the personality of Galilei and the concomitant problems, the issue of the responsibility of a scientists for his product and his place within society by two such singular artists differs with Wolfgang Heinz and Fritz Cremer in accordance with their artists spheres, just as with ways and means which have led them in their judgment. What is common to both these artists is their renewed intense concern for Bertolt Brecht's drama.

The brochure presents under various aspects observations, descriptions, documentary material, such as photos from rehearsals and reproductions of sketches and drawings by Cremer on Galilei which show the way taken by actor Wolfgang Heinz and sculptor Fritz Cremer towards their artistic final product.

This intention justifies the use of many kinds of methods and interpretations. In this sense the brochure represents an experiment since in spite of various endeavours to provide a documentary coverage of artistic creative processes by way of modern methods, there exists but scanty practical experience. Over and beymond, this juxtaposition constitutes a first contribution towards inter-sectional activities within the Academy.

Number 12

Felsenstein's Production of Carmen

Brochure 12 of the Academy of Arts of the GDR is devoted to the work of Professor Walter Felsenstein, the founder and master of realistic music-theater production in our Republic. Since the foundation of the Komische Oper, some 25 years ago, the work of its director and "Intendant" has been invariably been in the limelight of the public. Each new Felsenstein production is being expected with tension; it gives rise to admiration and passionate discussions and is, almost invariably, an event of great theatrical significance.

The production of Bizet's Carmen, which Felsenstein has now presented for the fifth time in a highly-creative manner, is used in this brochure to mediate a most varied and lucid insight into the workshop as well as a retrospective on the development of Felsenstein as a stage director.

Brochure available

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